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THE VALLEY OF DESIRE

A ROMANCE OF WILD WALES

by

EDITH NEPEAN

AUTHOR OF

"Cambria's Fair Daughter," "Petals in the Wind,"

*"Jewels in the Dust," "Gwyneth of the
Welsh Hills," and "Welsh Love"*




L O N D O N

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TO
THE GREAT, GREAT GRANDSON
OF A WELSHWOMAN
(MARGARET JONES OF ALLAGADNO
GLAMORGANSHIRE)
MOLYNEUX EDWARD NEPEAN
I
DEDICATE THIS BOOK



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THE VALLEY OF DESIRE

CHAPTER I

NEST OF NANT Y GLO

DAVY, the farm boy of Nant y Glo, was driving three black cows across the moist heath and turfy bog near Pont y Gwryd, when he heard a cry.

Lifting his face towards the mountains from whence came the call, he watched and waited. His peaked cap of grey tweed was turned back to front. A fringe of coarse hair formed a wavy decoration across his forehead. His irregular features were tanned and freckled by exposure to sun and wind at all seasons of the year. A pair of well worn corduroy trousers covered his long legs, an old khaki tunic adorned with the buttons of a Welsh Fusilier Regiment, gave protection to his thin body. With his red toil-stained hand, he formed a cup behind his ear.

He screwed up his brown eyes and listened intently : Hap it was the wind, or a bird of prey swooping down upon its luckless victim away in the awful solitudes above him. But again came the cry, this time more distinctly.

“Davy, Davy . . . Davy . . .”

He gave a low exclamation. It was Nest, his master's child !

“What indeed to goodness is the wench fach up to now ? ” he muttered, albeit there was more of anxiety

than irritation in his tone. Was not Nest reckless in her passion for roaming the hills? Did she not delight in teasing the inmates of Nant y Glo with her venturesome ways? Was she not precious to them . . . precious to Betti, Hew and Davy? On these things the young man pondered as he speedily made his way out of the bogs, leaving the cows to find their own path home.

He commenced to climb. The ascent was steep and laborious. Loose fragments of rock impeded his progress. He passed rapidly over shell imbedded stones, and old pieces of lava that had been flung up by some mighty internal upheaval in the dim ages, over which time had dropped his mysterious, impenetrable curtain.

At length Davy came to a gap in the mountain with sharp fangs of rock pointing upwards to giddy heights. And beside a swiftly-flowing rivulet knelt Nest, her pretty flower-like face was wrinkled in radiant smiles, her blue eyes dancing with mischief, her brown silky hair floating out upon the breeze. Oh, yes! Nest Anwyl was beautiful, beautiful in feature, beautiful in her supple strength, vivid as the berries that hang in clusters amid the feathery foliage of the mountain ash.

"Like a pinhead you looked down there in the bog," cried the girl gaily, "but I was glad to see you, Davy. Look you at the drowned lamb caught by the stones. Just in time you are to save it, before the water sweeps it away to the lakes."

Davy took a red pocket handkerchief from his pocket, and wiped away the perspiration clinging like dew upon his brow.

"Quick, quick, Davy bach!"

Upon the breast of the turbulent waters rushing

down from remote precipices, the lamb was borne, swiftly, silently, a storm-wrecked victim of mountain flood, and surging torrent, a pathetic atom of white wool with soft undeveloped limbs, and glazed, unseeing eyes.

Off came Davy's khaki tunic which betrayed a grey flannel shirt and a leather belt fastened with a Welsh Fusilier buckle, worn in proud recollection of his Army days. A travelled warrior was Davy bach. Had he not seen service in far away Gallipoli, in Salonica, and upon the blood-soaked plains of Flanders? He strode across the rivulet and caught up the dead lamb from the rocks and stones which offered temporary resistance against the onslaught of the stream. He flung the little body across his left shoulder, holding the limp paws in his hand.

"Here you are, Miss Nest, whatever do you want to do with the animal?"

He placed it on the turf at the girl's feet, and dragged on his coat.

"No more sense have you than Betti's mochyn dû (black pig)," laughed Nest. "Have you not been down to the shed lately? Is my father not working at a shepherd—a shepherd who has come too late to rescue his lamb? Have you not heard him say: 'Keep your eyes open now, dear people, for a strayed lamb that is hurt?' Here is something splendid for him, a lamb that is drowned." The girl's features softened. "Poor foolish little lamb," she went on gently, "too far indeed did you wander from your good shepherd. Father bach will carve you in stone, and people will gaze upon you and cry, 'Is not Ifor Anwyl the finest sculptor old Wales has ever known?'"

"Yes, yes, indeed, that is true," agreed Davy, "but the lamb belongs to Twm Jones, and here comes

the devil bach ! Nice old price you'll have to pay for the creature. Hard one at a deal is Jones."

"Champion am I at striking a bargain," Nest retorted.

"Ah, ah, all night have I been seeking her," shouted the red-faced farmer, pointing to the lamb.

"Pity you did not come a bit later," said Nest, with an innocent smile, "and you would not have had the trouble of carrying the old carcass all the way down to the village."

"Nice bit of money will I make from her wool."

"Nice little liar are you, man bach. How much money can you make out of her, not enough to buy you half a pint at Tal-y-Cafn Inn."

Jones frowned. Instinctively he knew that Nest wanted the lamb. He had been cutting turf when he heard her shouting to Davy. Half hidden by a ledge of rock he had beheld her eagerness at rescuing the carcass from the waters.

Nest turned to him impulsively. "Well, well, grey are your whiskers. Now, Davy here is young, give him a shilling and he will carry the lamb to your door."

Twm Jones frowned.

"Who am I to waste silver ?"

"Betti is good at butter making. What say you to two pounds of the best salted when she goes to Bethesda market ?"

The farmer stroked his beard.

"And what say you to a little baccy left at my place on the way back from Bethesda," he ventured.

"Betti shall leave you butter and tobacco," agreed Nest. "Now Davy, put the lamb across your shoulders, and we will go home. I am fair in my dealing, Mister Jones."

"Well, well," retorted the man, not ill pleased, "the girls have always had their way with me for sure."

He wished Nest good-day, and he returned to his task, to the cutting of turf, that later would be dried and used for fuel.

In the midst of the vale, far below, a strange mountain towered. From where Nest stood it looked almost like a pyramid, bare, and very rugged.

"One day I will climb Trifaen," she cried pointing to the mountain.

The young man shrugged his shoulders.

"If it were not for your pretty face, Miss Nest, many would say 'Pity the girl at Nant y Glo is not a boy.'"

Nest disregarded the retort. She was thrilled with the beauty of the broad plain Y Waen Oer, which in English means, the chilly mountainous flat, but to-day it was bathed in autumn sunshine. She gazed upon Llyn Boch Llwyd, the lake of the grey coat, and upon the dark waters of Llyn Ogwen. On another side was the deep hollow, where Rhys the Red, a mountain bard, had hidden, when his patron Robert ap Meredydd, a partisan of Glyndwr, became an outlawed chief. And behind her towered Snowdon, Snowdon and all his sons!

"Well, I may be very poor, and I may be very silly, but I'm glad I'm Welsh for sure," she cried to Davy with a sigh of satisfaction. "Come on, let's have a song, boy bach," and she broke out into the old Welsh doggerel.

"Mrs. Jones of Llanyfaes
She has got a pretty face,
But she is so very thin
She looks just like a pin."

and Davy joined in the refrain as they tramped homewards:

"Wass you effer see,
Wass you effer see,
Wass you effer see,
Such a jolly time before."

CHAPTER II

"WHEN I WAS ROAMING"

NANT Y GLO is a low grey stone building, sheltered from storms by grotesquely shaped fir trees, and set in a hollow in the mighty fastnesses of Snowdon. The house is cut off from the white tramping road that winds its way between the mountains by a fussy stream. A bridge of gnarled tree branches spans the rushing water that comes down from the hills.

Betti, the stout maid of Nant y Glo, hummed a hymn tune as she spread a white cloth upon the round table which stood in the centre of the red tiled kitchen. Her sleeves were rolled up above her elbow, and betrayed a pair of strong muscular arms, brown as an acorn. Her good natured ruddy face was more like that of a lad than a woman. Her reddish hair was streaked with grey and fastened in a bun at the nape of her neck. Around her sturdy loins her apron was coiled, showing a striped petticoat. Well worn clogs covered her feet.

Nest drew her faded scarlet cloak around her slim body when she ran lightly down the narrow staircase into the kitchen. She walked across to the wide open fireplace, over the leaping flames a large pot was suspended, in which good Welsh broth simmered slowly.

"The master bach is still in his shed," Betti grumbled, "nice thing you did for sure, Miss Nest, when you brought in that old carcass yesterday. Chip, chip, goes the master's chisel ever since he carried the lamb

into the shed. Six candles have I taken to him to light the place. Waste of good tallow for sure. Hew will bring a hanging lamp from Bethesda, if the master is going to spend his nights in the shed, as well as his days ! ”

“ It’s stupid to make a fuss, Betti fach,” remonstrated Nest. “ Pleased is my father with his model. Don’t forget the butter and baccy that I have promised to Twm Jones, or big noise will he make when he says his prayers aloud in Moriah on Sunday.”

“ Waste of good butter, waste of good baccy,” Betti replied sullenly. “ Begin thy supper, little maid. The master says you are not to wait for him, or disturb him.”

Nest shook her dark head until her shining curls made a veil across her sparkling eyes.

“ Now is my chance, Betti dear. Give me a slice of bread and cheese,” she went on coaxingly, “ and I will eat my supper on the slopes of Trifaen.”

Betti shrugged her shoulders.

“ The little fair people will steal you one of these days for sure,” she cried. Albeit she took a knife and cutting a generous piece of cheese and bread, she tied it up in a clean red handkerchief for “ the mistress fach,” which in English, dear people, means “ little mistress,” an affectionate diminutive much used in the land of the harp and feathers. “ For certain sure the death hounds will get you one night,” Betti added warningly.

“ Or a lover,” cried Nest mischievously, as she caught hold of Betti’s massive shoulders.

“ A lover ! ” retorted Betti despairingly, “ there’s no chance of a lover at Nant y Glo. Davy is too young, and Hew does not want a woman, a tuning fork is good enough for him, anyway.”

"Oh! Oh!" laughed Nest. "So you've been quarrelling again with Hew, sure sign of love, girl fach. What is the trouble this time?"

"Why does he go off on the old horse to Bethesda for singing practice, when I could take him for a nice walk to Capel Curig?"

"That's your fault, Betti," Nest told her solemnly. "Did I not hear you tell Hew to go to the devil, when he asked you for a kiss, and perhaps he went to find him in the singing meeting!"

"Foolish am I to tell you secrets," cried Betti angrily. "You laugh when I tell you that my heart is as heavy as a can of new milk."

"No, no, Betti dear," Nest remonstrated, "but if you love Hew, be nice to him. When I have a lover," she went on smilingly, "I'll be sweeter to him than the toffee at Llandair Fair."

"You know nothing of love," Betti retorted impatiently. "Love is a bitter thing."

"Well, indeed, perhaps you are right," Nest admitted. "But I would rather have love that is bitter, than no love at all!"

"Seek your lover first, then you will tell another tale, wench fach."

"My lover must be dark, and so tall, that when I want to kiss his lips, well I must stand on my tiptoes," said Nest with her gay laugh.

She passed out through the way of the door before Betti could reply, Taffy, the sheep dog, following at her heels.

Nest made her way across the rustic bridge, along the tramping road, past the little church and the village with its half a dozen houses, the meadows and the trees. She turned off and took a path that led through marshy grass. The keen air was exhilarating. This

was life! Real glorious life! She was happy, she commenced to sing the old Welsh song: Pan o'wn in Rhodio:

“ When I was roaming
In the gloaming
Of a balmy summer day,
Two were walking, two were talking,
And a maiden thus did say:
' In vain thy suing, all thy wooing
Will never win this heart of mine:
The waters ever seek their level,
Never will my heart seek thine! ’

The youth then sighing, thus replying:
' Thou art all the world to me,
Rank I heed not, wealth I need not,
I have all in having thee! ’ ”

Her voice was clear and beautiful. The liquid notes rang out into the still air. Soft roses glowed on her little oval face. She was a creature of joy, a flower of the mountains, ready to be plucked, to be cherished, or to be crushed, and disfigured beneath the ruthless foot of man. . . .

Taffy was running ahead, his tail in the air, his nose to the ground, game for rat or rabbit. Taffy was not troubled with Betti's misgivings as to the fate of her mistress. He admired Nest's instinct for sport. He was disappointed when she turned away from marsh and hedgerow. Beyond there was a long range of serrated rocks. She made her way over the mountains until fairy-like lakes glittered below her. She came to the pool Llyn y Cwm, known in English as the pool of dogs. She passed over swampy marsh and fearsome precipices, until she reached the stream of Llyn y Cwm which rolls down from a deep cleft, broken in its fall by a hundred mighty stones. Down below were many rocks with circular holes, which are called by the Welsh, the Devil's pots.

And now Trifaen was before her. From this side

of the valley this curiously shaped mountain reminded Nest of the delicately carved fans of slate, which the men fashion in the quarries. Behind it towered the Glyder bach out of which it is said Trifaen was formed. Nest was ever impressed with the sublime grandeur of the scene. With the passing of the seasons its beauty changed to greater beauty. She came to the edge of a hollow, and to the pool Llyn Boch Llwyd. Here the whole conic summit of Trifaen came in view. She had heard it said that no part of Snowdon had such a difficult ascent.

"Now or never," she thought to herself. She started off on her perilous climb. Taffy, whining and barking, refused to follow his too adventurous mistress. He decided that she was not playing the game. Hitherto Nest had contented herself with the grassy base of the mountain, but always she had made up her mind, that on a day she would make a bold attempt to scale those grim fan-like peaks.

This was the magic hour for the clefted hills! She climbed over dark stones, and up the gloomy heights towards the ledge beneath the rugged crags that formed the summit. The lure of the mountains had long since cast its spell upon Nest. She was determined to view the land of promise beyond the mountain girt valley, to behold all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

"More difficult than I thought," she confessed to herself. Her hands were now required to negotiate the perpendicular boulders of stone, as her feet sought footholds in the niches in the rock. She did not dare to look down. She heard Taffy whining and barking in the depths below.

She climbed cautiously, but with determination. Her spirit urged her onward. Never in her life had Nest allowed defeat to overtake her, at least not until

she had made a terrific fight for victory . . . and to conquer the Trifaen! Her blood leapt at the thought of it, as she pressed onward, breathless and a trifle exhausted. She came to within a few feet beneath the ledge. At last the goal! She gave a cry of delight, stream, lake and valley lay before her, hamlet and winding river. Suddenly something else attracted her attention. She saw a man's hands, and a head rise up above the ridge on the other side. She stood motionless, afraid, a picturesque figure, with her ruffled hair, and scarlet cloak, fluttering in the wind. A few minutes later, a man had also reached the ledge. He stared at her in amazement and he asked with a puzzled laugh:

“Are you one of the immortals, a nymph, or a real maid of the mountains?”

How tall he was, how broad, how lithe, how bronzed his features, how dark his eyes, how black his rather coarse hair, how white were his teeth, how perfect the cut of his rough tweeds! This stranger was no farmer's son, nor shepherd, nor peasant of the valley, but a type of man Nest had not met before.

As she did not answer him, he followed up his first question with a second one.

“Are you alone, did you make this ascent by yourself?”

She satisfied his curiosity at last in her pretty Welshy way:

“Well, yes, indeed, my dog is a coward. Taffy would not follow. But now that I have come to the ledge, I want to get to the top.”

The man glanced up, and then down at the girl—at her slight but well-proportioned figure. Her graceful curved hips were caressed by her pink cotton skirt as the wind whistled around them. Her bared

arms were brown, shapely and strong, her hands, small but capable, and her face, that wonderful mountain bred face, with the fearless grey blue eyes. He liked the contour of her throat, and her mouth . . . inviting and . . .

"By Jove, you are too damned beautiful to be out here by yourself."

"Beautiful!" Nest laughed and blushed. "Well, indeed, you are the first man who has ever called me that."

"Your friends must be blind, or blessed with miraculous powers of discretion."

"I have few friends. We live in a lonely spot."

"And do you often make this climb, pretty stiff even for a man!"

"It's my first attempt, and I am not going back until I've reached the top!"

"But your people, what would they say if they knew that you were trying to break your neck in this fashion?"

"I have no mother, sisters or brothers. My father is too busy to worry about me."

"Terribly risky for you to attempt Trifaen! When I was in India I made up my mind to climb it, saw a picture of it one day in a book on the Snowdon district. I didn't intend to do it to-day. I really set out to visit a place called Nant y Glo, the churchyard. It isn't often that a soldier is keen on that sort of thing, but I've a taste that way and I've heard of a wonderful piece of sculpture."

"What is it?"

"The carving on a tomb at Nant y Glo. It is the work of a Welsh sculptor, named Ifor Anwyl. After his wife's death he shut himself up and carved her figure in marble and then tried to become a recluse. By an irony of fate, the work he had fashioned in

sorrow brought him fame. Critics say he rivals Rodin and Epstein. He refuses to sell his work. Half starves on his farm where his people toiled before him. Heard of him ? ”

“ Ifor Anwyl is my father,” was the quiet answer.

Abashed and disconcerted the stranger said : “ Thank you for listening to idle gossip. You should have shut me up. Anyway, your father is a great sculptor. Is it true that he is a hermit ? ”

“ He hates strangers,” Nest answered gravely. “ His work is his life. For hours he has been modelling a lamb drowned in the flood, so I thought I would slip away and climb this old mountain.”

“ And thank whatever gods there be, that I decided on the same adventure to-day. I didn’t know what to do with myself. The fishing is bad, there is to be no shooting until my uncle returns from Paris. Meanwhile he insists that I should remain on his ancestral lands until it pleases him to come home.”

“ Who are you ? ” Nest asked simply.

“ Maelgwyn Cadvan.”

“ And your uncle ? ”

“ Lord Cadvan. Probably you know him, although like your father he detests strangers.”

Nest shook her head.

“ He is a bachelor,” Maelgwyn went on, “ hates me because I am his heir. Just the sort of old devil who’d marry at the eleventh hour to spite me, if I crossed him.”

“ You must be careful then,” was Nest’s swift retort.

“ Do you live far from here ? ”

“ Castell Cadvan is thirty miles away or more. I left my car at the foot of Trifaen. Are you really going to the top ? ”

She nodded.

Brilliant sunshine was now throwing a golden mantle over them, distant mountains glowed in a haze of blue and purple.

"It's a bit venturesome for you. Do you want to try it very much?"

"Yes, indeed," Nest answered. "I am going on."

"But not alone," Maelgwyn remonstrated swiftly, "that is if I may be permitted to say so. Suppose you reached the top and mists came up from the valley? I saw them the other afternoon, when I was trying to climb Crib Coch."

"There will be no mists to-day, for certain," Nest answered with conviction.

"Well, you might get light-headed, besides don't you agree that 'two's company?' " he asked.

"I've never thought much about it," was Nest's quick retort. "Until to-day my companion has always been Taffy."

"I want you to regard me as a more interesting companion than Taffy."

"Dogs are faithful."

"You are too young to say, 'I prefer animals to human beings.' You may take it from me that when a woman makes a remark like that, it's because she's past her first youth, sour grapes, that's the trouble!"

"Well, well, strange is your talk, and too familiar," Nest protested with feigned anger. "All the same, what of a man when he says animals are best?"

"A woman's turned him down, or he is on the borderland of senile decay."

Nest was not quite sure whether she liked this audacious stranger or not. His flippancy puzzled her. Hitherto her friends had been many years older than herself.

He was conscious of her disapproval.

“Pity a poor heathen,” he besought her with mock humility. “I’ve heard that you are all very goody-goody in Wales, that you live in chapel, and even sing hymns on the way to a fair or a football match.”

“It is disgraceful to make fun of religion,” Nest said warmly.

“Teach me to be good then,” Maelgwyn pleaded. “I’ve been bored stiff at the Castell for days, trying my best to live up to the part of the fair-haired boy. I have three months’ leave, and my uncle insists that I shall spend the three months with him, so that he can get to know me better, and I should love to give you the same opportunity!”

“It’s no use being angry with you,” said Nest, “but I think you’re very——”

She hesitated and flushed.

“Go on, out with it,” he urged.

“Forward.”

He roared with laughter, and when he recovered himself, he said: “I’m surprised you find me forward, for I’ve read that the boys bach of Wales are very bold indeed.”

“Who taught you to say bach?”

“Oh! I’ve Welsh blood you know. Had a Welsh nurse, she taught me that Cariad meant love, bach, little or dear, and that fach was feminine. She also taught me to swear forcibly in your native tongue. Would you like an example?”

“You told me you were a soldier,” said Nest contemptuously, “and our maid, Betti, has warned me that soldiers are a wild lot.”

“Dear me, I should like to meet Betti, she must have had some pleasing experiences.”

“Betti is a very good girl and goes to chapel every Sunday!”

"All the same, I'm sorry she's given you such a bad opinion of the Army. What about the gallant boys of Wales with whom I served in France?"

"Well, indeed, they are different. They don't get their living by it, they only fought to protect their country from the enemy, the old Germans."

"Good Heavens! You don't think I get my living as you call it, by being a Captain in a Mounted Corps, do you? I have to wangle my uncle to stump up to keep me there."

"Well, indeed man bach, but it's your job anyway. When the war was over, our men came back to till the land again."

"Lucky dogs! Are all Welsh girls as charming as you?"

"You'll find that out for yourself, if you're as cheeky to every girl you meet, as you are to me," she said crossly.

"Ah! forgive me. I won't be cheeky any more. Let us proclaim a truce and climb Trifaen together."

Nest could not resist this appeal. The man at her side looked strong and dependable, and the precipices were alarmingly steep. He saw that he had made a momentary impression, and said hastily:

"You can trust yourself to me without fear. I've had some experience in climbing the Himalayas. Take off that cloak, and leave it on the ledge. You will want unimpeded freedom of body and hands."

Nest obeyed him, but before she rolled up her cloak, she unfastened the button of a pocket and in taking the bread and cheese therefrom, a thin faded purple book fell out upon the uneven stone platform.

Maelgwyn picked it up, and seeing a marked passage, his curiosity was aroused. Aloud he read:

"At the hour when the day shall end, and where the

shadows lengthen, return, my beloved, and be thou like unto a doe or a hind's fawn upon the clefted mountains.' Have you a lover upon the clefted mountains?" he asked gravely.

"Well no indeed," Nest answered with a flush. "The book belonged to my mother. It was in her hands when she died. It reminded my father of her death, so I hid it from him, and she marked that page, and many pencil notes she made. One leaf is turned over and I never unfolded it. Too often when I read this book I feel that I am prying into the secrets of her heart."

"She was romantic?"

"She ran away with my father when she was eighteen. Her people never forgave her. My father seldom speaks of her. His hurt is too great. That is why he spends hours in his shed, carving in stone and in marble, and thinking of the woman who loved him so deeply."

"I've always heard that Welsh love is dangerous," said Maelgwyn banteringly. "Once I was warned by my uncle never to love a Welsh girl. 'If you commit that folly,' he told me, 'you will never rid yourself of her, or of her spell. You may hate her, but you'll want her. She understands passion, she holds the key to love.'"

"Well, be sure to take his warning to heart," Nest retorted. "Maybe he is right, for all these empty years my father has dwelt on the memory of my mother."

Maelgwyn's interest in this mountain maid grew apace. She gave the impression that she wished to start on their adventure.

"Come along," he cried. "Now for the attack of Trifaen!"

CHAPTER III

UPON THE CLEFTED MOUNTAINS

PLACING her foot on a slab of rock and using her hands to grip the face of the massive crag, Nest led the way up Trifaen.

Maelgwyn paused for a moment to study his companion. Each step this "desirable girl" took, to use his own mental appreciation of her, brought him fresh surprises. At first it was her vivid beauty, the supple strength of her body, the strong but shapely limbs that appealed to him. He worshipped strength, albeit in a woman his standard was exacting. He required strength allied to beauty, but not in antagonism to the indefinable charm of sex appeal. But now he discovered that this maid had something more than beauty, a fearless spirit, that made her one with the alluring and wild beauty of her own stormy hills. She climbed on cautiously, one false step, one instant's thoughtlessness meant death, for below were precipices and gloomy gorges. She became conscious that her companion was halting, and half turning her head, she called out :

"Come on, man bach, I shall reach the top before you, if you don't hurry up !"

Nest was excited, more excited than she had ever been in her life before. She laughed with sheer pleasure and joy of living when Maelgwyn's answer reached her : Right O, I'm coming.

She did not wait for him. With her steady gaze fixed upon the goal, she climbed higher and higher.

More than once Maelgwyn had a chill sensation that he had been unwise to encourage the girl to make this hazardous climb. They could not take a dozen steps without at the same time using their hands. The eerie scene filled him with horror. At last, with a breathless cry, Nest was at the top, and when Maelgwyn reached her, she had thrown herself down at the foot of one of the two upright stones which crown the summit. For some seconds the scene before them was so stupendously wonderful that neither of them wished to speak. They were on a mere pinnacle that had on one side a precipice deeper than any Maelgwyn had seen before.

"Perhaps you would like to climb up one of those stones," he said tauntingly.

"Thank you very much, but not to-day," was Nest's answer. "The stones are a yard and a half apart, and once I did hear of a man who climbed to the top of one and jumped across to the other!"

"I'd rather not risk the stunt," said Maelgwyn decidedly, "an inch or two out in the jump, down the precipice and amen."

Nest surveyed the scene before her with all the intense ardour of a nature worshipper. Her resolute little chin rested in the cup of her hand, and in a low tone she murmured, almost as if she were reciting a prayer:

"The Heavens declare the glory of God: and the firmament sheweth His handiwork

One day telleth another: and one night certifieth another:

There is neither speech nor language, but their voices are heard among them.

Their sound is gone out into all lands, and their words into the ends of the world.

In them hath He set a tabernacle for the sun . . ."

Maelgwyn's mouth took a firmer curve as he listened to her sweet voice. She was more than desirable, more than strong, or beautiful or brave, so might a hundred and one women be in these days of equal rights with men. But this girl had emotion, she could be responsive, adorable to the man to whom she gave herself. . . .

"Wonderful for sure," she cried.

And the man, watching the flushing and the paling of her rounded cheek, felt suddenly fired by the entrancing glory of her womanhood and exclaimed:

"Not more wonderful than you!"

But she disregarded his ardent outburst. She was too deeply engrossed by the scene that stretched before her, to allow compliments to please or distress her.

"Was there ever such a place as Wales," she cried.

Mountain piled upon mountain, rushing stream, placid lake and hamlet. The hills in the far distance looked like grim phantoms rising in the mist. They watched the sun go down in blood red glory, they saw the Glyders wrapped in purple and gold, and the road that cut like a white ribbon through the pass. The sheep made patterns on the grass as they were driven along by sheepdogs, until they were gathered into their fold for the night.

"We must leave it," the girl spoke regretfully, because deep in her heart she knew that never again would she see the sun sink under these conditions. . . .

"The glory of God," she repeated to herself softly. And now Maelgwyn was speaking, and she listened in silence.

"At least, oh! maid of the mountains, we have some things in common, the love of adventure and the love of all things beautiful! Just the sort of pal I've wanted all my life. Here on the summit of Trifaen

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let us plight our troth to friendship. Help me to bear the lonely months at Cadvan. Is it a bargain ? ”

Nest looked up and met his earnest glance and she flushed.

“ Well, indeed to goodness,” she retorted quickly, “ whatever do you wish me to do ? ”

“ Let this be the beginning of many a climb together over the hills. You know me and I know you. Tri-faen has introduced us, and the call of youth.”

“ The call of youth,” Nest asked doubtfully, “ well, indeed, what do you mean, boy bach. I do not understand your high falutin’ talk. Speak plain.”

“ How can I speak plainer,” Maelgwyn replied earnestly. “ Youth calls to youth. It has the same ambitions, the same frenzied desire to sweep down barriers and break away to open spaces. The blood of youth is warm, superb, impetuous, joyous, restless, too, ever anxious to probe the unknown, always waiting with outstretched hands as it were to seize the cup of life and drain it to the dregs.”

“ Oh ! ” Nest cried.

He bent over her. “ Why, what is the matter ! ”

“ You say all the things that have been locked away in my heart, and that I could not speak of to another soul, for had I done so, who indeed would have understood me ? You speak,” she went on breathlessly, “ as I think.”

Maelgwyn smiled and he said swiftly :

“ That is fortunate, it proves what I feel, that we have much in common. There was a time when I might have said that we were affinities, but it is a dangerous word.”

“ Why dangerous ? ”

“ It is a word occasionally used as an excuse for all kinds of follies.”

Nest sighed. There were times when he spoke in riddles. She could not understand him. From her earliest days, although buried deep in the wilds of Snowdonia, her exquisite romantic beauty had brought her many admirers, but they received no encouragement, for Nest had not been interested in any of them. In due course the girl's budding womanhood, and that subtle exotic charm that ever creates admiration and desire in a man's heart, belied the remarks of disappointed wooers :

" Well, well, Nest is pretty as a wild rose, but her heart is colder than the snows, her blood no warmer than ice on Ogwen's pool."

For a short space there was silence between them. Both were loath to leave this enchanted pinnacle in the clouds.

" This place stirs up memories," Maelgwyn confessed. " An Indian poem that I have not thought of for years has just come to my mind."

" What is it ? "

He quoted softly :

" O mother earth ! O father air ! O light,
My friend ! O kindred water ! and thou height
Of skies, my brother !—Crying unto you,
Crying, I plead adieu."

" Yes, indeed, it means all that," Nest agreed. " I have often felt that I belong to these old mountains, but don't talk as if you are leaving them."

Almost unconsciously the man crushed her hand within his own.

" Don't you feel that we shall never stand here again like this ? "

" Why not ? " her voice was strained.

" Because, little flower," Maelgwyn answered, " one can never be thrilled twice by the same emotion.

One can never climb Trifaen again and find a girl like you. I might come a thousand times and never discover that nymph in a scarlet cloak, gazing at me through the veil of mists as if she has been waiting for me all her life."

Nest did not answer, she turned from him and commenced to make the perilous descent, her heart beating tumultuously; this man was going to revolutionise her life. Here was a man who would rob her of her love!

The descent was not less hazardous than the ascent. Both secretly knew that too long they had dallied on the summit. The sun had gone down, and a cool wind sprang up. The clouds came down from the mountains and enveloped them in a thick mantle of impenetrable whiteness.

"By Jove, this is the limit," cried Maelgwyn. "I feel like a fly on the top of a ceiling. I don't know what lies beneath."

Clinging on to the rocks with her little hands, Nest answered him.

"It's all right, as long as we keep in a straight line. We ought to reach the ledge in half an hour."

The density of the clouds had increased. Although Maelgwyn was but a few yards away from Nest, his form was only faintly outlined. For the first time fear gripped her. She had always been lucky in her mountain climbing. She never failed to keep a sharp lookout for rising mist. At the first hint of this dangerous foe, she usually made her way down to the valley. And now they were trapped. The enemy had come forth stealthily out of the fastnesses of rugged peaks that were so dear to her. To-day she had been blind to the warning, supremely happy, talking, listening, to this new friend who had come to her like

a legendary knight from beyond the barrier of the mountains.

"It's difficult. God!"

There was a rumbling sound and silence. . . . Half afraid of what she might see, Nest turned her head.

"Dear me, whatever is the matter," she faltered. But there was no answer, no companion, only the cold rock in her hands, and the giddy precipices beneath. Maelgwyn had lost his foothold. He had vanished . . . disappeared into the depths beneath!

CHAPTER IV

THE HERMIT OF THE HILLS

SIX candles burnt low in their enamel sockets in the shed wherein Ifor Anwyl fashioned man, maid and beast in marble and stone—masterpieces that would have wrested honour from all countries, had the sculptor hermit chosen to exhibit them.

In the churchyard a mile away was the tomb of his girl wife—a recumbent figure with beautiful listless hands. Eyelids drooping over regretful eyes, sweet lips trembling in a piteous smile, a piteous smile accepting the inevitable sleep of death! And as one gazed upon that sculptured form, one did not see peace, but rebellion: young life protesting against the closing of the door. . . . To this shrine of love and genius, came many people, but Ifor Anwyl saw them not. At the salon another Anwyl masterpiece had drawn vast crowds. It was a war memorial to the Welsh troops. Against a rocky mountainous background a group of men in khaki were seen rushing across the fields, trampling daffodils, the blossoms of early spring, beneath their ruthless feet, whilst a wounded drummer boy on his knees, with agonized features vainly sought to save the fair emblems of his native soil. At the base in Welsh these words were carved; "To the memory of the Flower of Wales." For this symbolical triumph of Anwyl's chisel the French Government bestowed a decoration. The frail

wings of fame fluttered about him, but Anwyl heeded them not ! In that quiet shed, he worked day in, day out, month after month, year after year. In the mean season Myfanwy's baby became a child, and from girlhood, she was passing swiftly to the danger zone of womanhood. And Anwyl ? Did he not live in Myfanwy's love ? Did she not inspire him as he worked ? His silent companion from the world of shadows. At times he fancied that he felt the pressure of her kiss upon his lips, just as she used to kiss him, swiftly, passionately, darting playfully away again, like a sunbeam dancing on the outer walls of a gloomy room. This was Anwyl's secret. The reason that he spurned the flotsam and jetsam of life, the tinsel and gold of earthly success. Contact with the material world would rob him of communion with his love. . . . He tried to eschew that which was of the earth, and sought to live in the world of the spirit. The things that were unseen were realities, the material things unreal. And Nest, his child, hungered for the outward and visible signs of human love, the love that her father lavished upon a dream !

A candle spluttered and the light went out. Anwyl looked up and the dying glare from the remaining candles played upon his clean shaved, sensitive features. He was a tall spare man, with stooping shoulders. He wore a grey homespun suit, partially covered by a patched faded blue linen coat. His eyes, dark grey, glowing with rare hidden fire, were overhung with bushy eyebrows. His grey hair was thick and formed a fringe upon his collar. His sleeves were rolled back from his wrists, his deft fingers covered in modelling clay, betrayed strength and energy. He was absorbed in his work, modelling the lamb lying before him on a piece of turf which Hew had brought into the shed.

The crouching attitude of Anwyl's body, the intensity of his expression, showed a sense of cruelty, of selfishness, of utter callousness with regard to life beyond the shaping of creatures in stone.

He had worked for hours without rest, his usual habit when in the throes of the mood, that made him master of his craft. To-morrow the lamb would have lost its limp helplessness. In this manner he had worked long years ago, when the lifeless body of the woman who had enthralled him lay before him. Her arms folded upon her favourite foliage. The scarlet berries and delicate leaves of the mountain ash, partly concealing the voluptuous curve of her bosom upon which his dark head had rested on many rapturous nights. . . .

Oh! the mockery of it! He thought of it again as he moulded the mouth of the lamb, slightly open, showing baby teeth. He had been crucified by agony when he carved Myfanwy's body in marble. To-night he thought of those two years of bitter work, dead to the world, speaking to no one, heedless of the baby, the fruit of their love. Betti, the young peasant girl, brought up the child.

Fame came to Anwyl unsought, and he scorned it. He found refuge in his labour. He destroyed desire and hope. He became old. Absorbed in dreams of the past, he gazed wonderingly at Betti standing on the threshold.

Betti was growing stupid, he sighed. She was fat, fat and forty or more, with big hips and red cheeks. She looked worried, and why was there fear in her eyes? As a rule they were round and hard like the peppermint balls sold on the stalls on fair days.

"Oh! Master bach," she cried, "it's no good you

looking cross at me like that whatever. It is baking day to-morrow for sure, and I went to bed early. But I could not sleep. I slipped on an old coat and petticoat to look in Miss Nest's room, and she is not there. There's frightened I am, Taffy is back and he will not stop barking."

"Well, indeed, woman fach," cried Anwyl impatiently, with a frown, "why all this fuss? Does not Nest wander every day upon the hills? Don't you understand?" he remonstrated, bending over his work. "Time is too precious for me to be worried by your foolish fancies."

Betti became angry.

"Do you not mind that it is past midnight? Never has she been out before at this hour. Did she not set forth for Trifaen to eat her supper on the slopes, but the night is misty. What shall we do if she has lost her way and fallen?"

Anwyl looked dazed. When he was working his imaginings took him far away from the earth.

"Fallen?" He became conscious of his fatigue, he had not eaten for hours. "Fallen?" he repeated vaguely. He passed his hand across his forehead, leaving behind a streak of clay.

"I will go out. I will find her. Why did you not tell me earlier?" Anwyl swayed towards the door.

"You cannot go, master bach," Betti declared. "I will call the men from the loft, Hew and Davy."

Anwyl blew out the candles and followed her helplessly along the narrow path that was cut through the garden and bordered with rough hewn quartz from the rocky mountain sides.

Betti went to the foot of the ladder that led to the loft and she called out in Welsh:

"Come you down quick, Miss Nest is lost. Take

torches and find her. She went over the mountains, to Trifaen, but we will go around by the road. No good at all are men," Betti declared to her master, " without a woman to show them what to do."

The fire in the grate was out, but she brought sticks, paper and coal. She set them alight, before she went off to her room. When she returned she was wearing a striped petticoat and a blue stuff blouse, a grey shawl was arranged over her full bosom like a cross over, and it was fastened behind with a safety pin.

" Well, what shall I do," cried Anwyl, " sit here and wait while you search ? "

" Well, indeed, master," Betti replied solemnly, " there must always be one to watch and pray. But for goodness' sake keep the kettle on the boil. A cup of tea will be very comforting to the inside when we get back."

Betti's directions were obeyed. Hew, strong limbed and muscular with high cheek bones, tried to put his arm around Betti's waist.

" Sweet was your voice to me for sure," he whispered, " thought you wanted me for a bit of courting."

" Shut your mouth, fox bach ! " cried Betti. " When a man comes courting me, he must do it in the open, not when the door is closed for the night."

" Honest are my words, Betti dear," Hew protested in a hurt voice, " no sneaking grass snake am I."

Betti flushed.

" Tush, tush, man, shocking is your speech when the little mistress is missing."

" Well, well, Davy, light your lantern."

" Useless, indeed, to-night," Betti declared. " It will make no flare in the sky whatever." She went to a drawer and brought forth some rags and formed them into thick pads at the ends of some stout branches of

trees, that had been brought into the kitchen for lighting the fire. She soaked the pads in paraffin oil, explaining to Hew and Davy :

" We will put a match to them. If the little mistress is up on Trifaen she will see we are searching for her."

They set forth in single file, holding the improvised torches high above their heads. Davy, anxious and silent, Hew, strong, confident and reliable, Betti talking incessantly, or calling Nest's name loudly, but her cries were lost in the mountains. At length they came to the foot of Trifaen. Walking became difficult. Their feet sank into the marshy land. When they came to the slopes of the mountain, together they shouted for Nest. Moving to the left, Hew noticed a dark form ahead of him, he uttered a cry :

" Well, here is something strange, a motor-car, and nobody in it. What a spot to find an old tin-lizzie at this time of night."

They examined it by the light of their torches. But it was not " an old tin-lizzie," but an elegantly appointed Rover. Such a luxurious car was not used by any of the farmers in the district.

" I don't like the look of things whateffer," Hew grumbled dismally. " Strangers wandering about these parts. Wolves in sheep's clothing, look you ! "

" Miss Nest is not frightened of any man," said Betti indignantly.

" Hush, what is that ! "

It was Davy who spoke, the glare of the torches lit up the sky. They paused.

" Nothing at all ! Some old owl screeching itself hoarse."

They took a few steps forward and Hew shouted out :

" Where are you ! " for borne upon the wings of the

wind came a voice they knew. Nest's voice calling frantically.

"Help . . . Help . . . Help!"

"You hear?" cried Hew. "She is up among the boulders. We must go slow. You wait here, Betti."

She fell in with his suggestion.

"Well indeed, good am I for making a man's shirt, and splendid is my butter, but my legs will not help me to climb Trifaen. I will wait for you here until you come back."

"Help is coming," Hew shouted. "Where—are—you?"

And very faintly came the answer.

"I can see your lights—far below me. Climb straight up—near the ledge."

"Stay you here, Betti fach," said Hew excitedly. "We will wheel the old motor this way. You shall sit in her and keep the flare going, my girl, whateffer happens, so then we can find our way when we want to turn back."

With difficulty the car was wheeled towards the spot where Betti waited. Davy found a petrol can and he sprinkled the torches with spirit so that the flames lit up the vast masses of rock.

Hew and Davy made the ascent with difficulty. The flares cast shadows around them. Once or twice the shale caused them to slip and glide down the mountain. But Hew recovered himself.

They heard Nest's directions.

"This way, over the stones. Be careful of the rope!"

The men were mystified by her warning, but they made their way in the direction of the sound of Nest's voice. Davy's torch burnt itself out, and he threw it away from him with a groan.

"Hap we shall never find the mistress without a flare!"

But Hew broke out fiercely:

"We've got to find her. I'll have Betti playing March of the Men of Harlech with a broom handle on my head, if we go back without her." As he spoke he gave a cry: "See, man, what's there?"

He grasped a buttress of rock with his left hand, and holding his torch high above his head, both men saw a man's body lying on a buttress of stone. They scrambled towards him. The man was unconscious. Around his waist there appeared to be a belt of scarlet cloth. It was a dangerous business for Hew and Davy. Beneath the buttress was a deep perpendicular wall of stone.

"Well, well, careful now," Hew warned the lad. "We want feet like sheep, to keep up on this bit of Trifaen."

Cautiously they made their way to the man's side and then they heard Nest's voice above them.

"I cannot see, and my hands hurt me."

Davy balanced himself on one knee. He saw that the belt of scarlet was at the end of knotted strands of cloth. He recognised it. Nest's cloak! The rope was taut, holding the stranger from certain death.

"Quick, Davy, we must get up to her. You stay here, lie on your stomach and keep your arms around the man until I get back, then we'll drag him along."

Davy obediently carried out the older man's instructions. Hew struggled up the rugged heights until he reached the ledge, and then he paused, startled. Nest was lying full length on the bed of stone, holding one end of the knotted rope, which was twisted around a jagged fang of stone.

"Quick, quick," she groaned.

She was exhausted and cold. The cloth around the rock had worn itself to a few strands. The sharp edges of the stone cut like a saw upon the soft woollen material, and for safety the girl had twined it around her wrists. Her hands were swollen and numb, she was at the end of her tether. She cried despairingly :

“ Oh, Hew, Hew, I cannot keep him up any longer, and he was a fine man ! ”

Hew quickly unwound the cloth from her wrists.

“ Oh ! why have you done that ? Is it too late ? Is he dead ? ”

“ No, indeed, I don't think as bad as that,” was the answer. “ Davy has him safe until I return. Stay you here, mistress fach, until we get the stranger to a place of safety and then indeed, we will hurry back to you.”

“ I will wait.”

Hew left her, and disappeared over the precipice. With strained ears Nest listened as he made his way to the spot from whence he had come. The flare of his torch died away. To Nest waiting alone on that perilous ledge moments became centuries. Far away in the east she saw a glimmer of light heralding the dawn. Dawn upon the hills, and Love in her heart ! Her pulses throbbed as the truth revealed itself to her simultaneously with the faint light that made a rosy gleam upon the far away horizon. She knew that of a truth her beloved had come to her upon the clefted mountains . . .

The sky grew red with dawn. The red sky that heralds storms in the desolate wilds of Wales. And still Hew came not. She became afraid. Some harm had befallen the rescuers. She tried to look over the precipice but everything was indistinct. The suspense became unbearable. Nest was desperate. She had

almost decided to take her fate into her own hands when she heard Davy's voice :

"Are you there, little mistress?" The next moment the farm boy was by her side.

"Is he safe?"

"Well yes indeed. Long have we been dragging him down. He is in the car."

"Hurt?"

"His leg is broken, but Hew would not let me move him until we had put it in a splint. Lucky there were fishing rods in the car."

"The car?"

"Yes, at the bottom of Trifaen."

It was now light enough for Nest to find a foothold. In silence she and Davy climbed down. Her hands were still swollen, her clothes drenched with the dews of Heaven. Once more she was upon the grassy slopes of Trifaen.

A gate had been placed across the car and upon it Maelgwyn was lying. Betti had wrapped her woollen shawl around his shoulders. He was conscious when Nest reached him.

"My God! I thought you were killed," he muttered feebly. "What happened?" but before Nest could reply he had relapsed into unconsciousness.

"Well indeed, who is he?" asked Hew scratching his head.

Nest ignored his curiosity. What was she to do with the injured man? That was the question which tormented her. Did he not say it was thirty miles or more to Castell Cadvan, and no one could drive a car?

Davy offered his services. Had he not driven a live General across the battlefields of France when he was soldiering? Nest had heard this story before, but she disregarded the boasting of her father's servant.

"Well, indeed, there have been enough accidents, we will push the car along."

"But, mistress fach, where will you take the stranger to?" Betti asked anxiously.

"Home, of course," said Nest.

CHAPTER V

KISS ME !

BETTI pursed her lips. She gave a critical glance at the injured man on the improvised stretcher. That he was good-looking no one could deny, but Betti had cherished Nest like a ewe lamb since the day of her mother's death. Betti, the rough farm servant, who could crack a broad joke with many a boy bach on a fair day, had lavished the slumbering fires of maternal love upon her master's child.

Like many women of her race, Betti had no liking for a "sais," which in English means a stranger. Betti was suspicious of anyone who came from beyond the limits of her own valley. Therefore there was strong disapproval on her face when she remonstrated in an undertone :

"Dear me, Miss Nest, what indeed will the master say ? We know nothing at all about this man. Better try and get him home by Bethesda, or maybe he is staying at Capel Curig at one of the hotels."

Nest shook her head, and she astonished Betti with her decisive reply.

"He shall go to Nant y Glo. I know all about him."

There was no more to be said. Shy rays of sunlight were warming the chilly atmosphere of early dawn. Davy and Hew pushed the car along. It was a fatiguing task. At last they came to the bridge that led to

the farm. To the left there was a round house made of rough grey stones where sheep and cattle sheltered when storms swept down from the hills. It looked almost like the ruin of an old watch tower, with trails of ivy covering the age-worn structure.

"I will go and tell my father about the accident," said Nest. "Bring the injured man along carefully."

She hurried across the bridge and opened the door of the house. Ifor Anwyl had carried out Betti's orders, there was a good fire, the kettle was singing, but worn out with watching, the old man had fallen into a deep sleep. When Nest walked quickly towards him, the clack, clack of her shoes upon the red tiles awakened him. He rubbed his hands across his eyes, and started up when he saw his child standing before him, her damp clothes outlining the curves of her seductive body.

He remonstrated with her angrily :

"They went out to search for you, Betti, Davy and Hew. You must stop wandering about like this. It is morning. All night have I waited."

She threw her arms around her father and kissed him.

"It was an accident, that kept me," she explained. "On the ledge of Trifaen I met a stranger. We both tried to reach the top. On coming down the clouds descended upon us. He stumbled and fell. I heard him shouting for a rope, but I had nothing but my cloak. I tore it into strips. I knotted it and dropped it over the precipice. He fastened one end around his waist, and I passed the other end around a tooth of rock so that it would act as a stay. . . . After that he did not speak, and I feared that he was dead. . . . And then in the darkness I saw torches, and I cried out. Davy and Hew reached me just in time. The

stranger has a broken leg. They must lay him upon my bed, and I will sleep in Betti's room. Send Davy on a horse to Bethesda for Dr. Howell."

"My work must not be upset. I am very busy," Anwyl grumbled, "tiresome is illness about the place."

"But, father bach, you would not turn an injured sheep away from your door, why a human being? See, they are coming! Keep the door wide open. Tell them to bring him straight up to my room."

It was difficult to get Maelgwyn up the staircase and through the narrow doorway. Betti ran off to fill hot water bottles. Davy was despatched for a doctor. Nest opened the door of her little painted wardrobe and took an armful of clothes and deposited them upon Betti's bed with its gay patchwork quilt, and she hastily changed her damp clothing.

Warmth brought consciousness back to Maelgwyn. His glance rested on Nest's vivid glowing beauty with puzzled interest, and then recognition lit up his pallid features.

"Hello, maid of the mountains," he muttered weakly, "how the deuce did I get here?"

"It is my home, Nant y Glo. It was too far to Castell Cadvan—and your leg."

"Yes, my leg. There's something damnable about my leg. Gone to sleep, that's what's the matter. Help me up, there's a good girl. A trot round this jolly little room will soon put me right. Hello, who plays that harp?" He struggled to get up, but he sank back with a groan of pain.

"You must lie still until the doctor comes."

Betti came in with a cup of tea.

"Who are you, anyway?" he asked her, as he drank the tea greedily. He was "damnable thirsty." He

never remembered having experienced such a thirst before. He vaguely heard Betti's voluble explanations as to her place and position at Nant y Glo. Nest shook her head and whispered:

"Be careful now, Betti fach. He is a bit feverish."

Betti was not any too pleased at this admonishment, and she said in Welsh:

"Well, well, you seem to know a great deal about him, Miss Nest, is he a secret lover that you kept hidden in old Trifaen, or have you fallen in love with the 'sais' at first sight?"

"Shut up," Nest returned crossly in her native tongue. "He may understand every word you say for all we know!"

Betti shrugged her shoulders as she left the room. Albeit she consoled herself, that she would get all details about the night's adventure out of Nest, before her eyes closed in sleep at the end of the day.

Within an hour Davy returned with Dr. Howell from Bethesda. Howell was a slim angular man with weather-beaten features, a shaved upper lip and fair hair. His tweed clothes had a sporting touch about them. A yellow and black striped tie was worn with a turned down flannel collar. Having made a minute examination of the patient, he pronounced that Maelgwyn had a simple fracture of the leg. Planks were arranged across the bed to enable the invalid to keep his leg straight. Before leaving, Howell said, "You'll be a prisoner here for six weeks."

"But it is terrible to inflict myself on strangers like this!"

"From what I have heard of Ifor Anwyl your presence here will not inconvenience him one way or another," Howell grinned, showing his strong, white teeth. "He is a disagreeable old fellow. As for his

daughter . . .” He cut short his unfinished sentence with an unpleasant laugh.

“It’s damned awkward,” sighed Maelgwyn. “You must fix me up to get back to Castell Cadvan as soon as possible !”

“Castell Cadvan ?”

Howell did not hide his interest.

“I am Lord Cadvan’s nephew. He’s returning from the south of France at the end of the month. I’ve just got back from the East. My regiment will be stationed at Shorncliffe. My uncle wished me to have a trial run with his tenants. Wanted me to stick it on my own till he came back, and now——”

“By jove,” Howell exclaimed, “you’re the heir to Cadvan !”

A grey pallor spread over Maelgwyn’s features, his lips took a blue tinge, the pain was unbearable.

Howell called for Nest.

“Have you the nerve to help me while I set Captain Cadvan’s leg in splints ?”

She hesitated for a moment, braced herself up, and said :

“Yes, indeed.”

“Come along, then.”

The girl walked over to the bed.

“Sorry you are in such pain,” she whispered.

For answer Maelgwyn caught her hand and pressed it between his fingers.

When he came back to the world again from the sleep of chloroform, it was night-time. Once again the old feeling swept over him, that he was dreaming. His eyes rested on a girl sitting in the candlelight, with her fingers clasped loosely across her knees. The room was lost in deep shadows, but the vivid voluptuous beauty of the girl’s figure, stood out boldly. The sight

of her aroused him. . . . She was wonderful. His maid of the mountains. His heart warmed towards her. She walked noiselessly across the room and bent over him.

"Boy bach, you are better. Nice custard have I made for you with new laid eggs." She slipped her warm arm beneath his dark head and fed him.

He sank back contentedly. She wiped his lips with a handkerchief, and once again he caught her fingers, and pulled her down until her face was so near to his that she could feel his breath upon her skin.

"Do you know," he said earnestly, "no woman has been so good to me as you are. I am terribly afraid—terribly afraid that I shall fall in love with you."

She felt waves of colour passing over her face.

"That would never do," she replied tremulously, "go to sleep. To-morrow you will be much better. I have put a bell on a table by your side. If you want anything in the night, ring and someone will come to you."

"Very well, I will be good and go to sleep if you will do one thing?"

"Well, what is it?" The question was so low that it was almost a whisper. Nest was afraid. It would be so difficult to refuse her patient anything he wanted. He looked so boyish, so helpless. His face was as white as the marble in the shed at the end of the garden. There were dark shadows beneath his eyes, now partly covered by lids which were fringed with lashes as dark as a crow's wing.

"Kiss me—and—then I shall sleep."

She trembled. This was the crisis of her life.

"Do."

The pleading of his voice was irresistible. Flush-

ing and trembling she bent over him and their lips met. She crept away from the room.

At the foot of the staircase Nest met her father. She had not seen him all day. His meals had been sent out to the shed. Now he was going to bed.

"How's the stranger?" he asked. "I thought it best not to worry him with a visit to-day. They tell me you had Doctor Howell here. What did he say?"

"That he must not be moved for some time."

"Dear me, better let his people know. Has he told you anything about himself?"

"Only that he is a nephew of Lord Cadvan."

There was a tense pause. Anwyl was struggling with some deep hidden memory; frightened by his manner, Nest cried out:

"Father, what is it, what is troubling you?"

He looked dazed when he muttered in reply:

"Cadvan? Well, well, fancy Cadvan coming into my life again after all these years . . . the ways of God are strange."

"You know Lord Cadvan?"

"Yes, I knew him years ago, when I was a young man, but there is a veil between us. I would not have it lifted!"

CHAPTER VI

THE SPORTIVE LOVE GOD

ILLNESS taught Maelgwyn that Nest was temperamental, that she could be dangerously sympathetic and warm-hearted. . . . For weeks he lay stretched upon his bed of planks. He knew every flaw and every good point in the old-fashioned furniture, every tint in the curtains, and the number of roses that were dotted at regular intervals upon the wall paper. He knew the magic of Nest's beautiful gilt harp that stood in one corner of the room. The harp had belonged to her Mother, Nest explained, also that it was greatly valued by her father.

"Even when I play at Eistoddfodau," she confided to Maelgwyn, "he will not let me take it from the house, so my Auntie Marged lends me one from Craig Wen."

She sang old Welsh folksongs and ballads, to while away long hours. Her sweet voice throbbing through the little room, her fingers passing deftly over the strings of her harp.

Maelgwyn had known many women in his time, good, bad and indifferent, but Nest was unlike any one of them. There was a freshness about her that fascinated him, a sympathy that he had not met before, a gentleness that was almost a contradiction to her virile, almost boyish personality. He had expressed a wish that his uncle should not be told of the accident.

"In any case he will not be home for another month," Maelgwyn explained to Nest, "also I don't know where he is at the moment. The only address he leaves behind when he goes abroad is his club—the Carlton. I presume he has given orders for letters to be redirected to him from there."

A day or so after the accident Maelgwyn sent a message to the old butler at Castell Cadvan for some clothes, and directed that a telegram was to be despatched to him immediately. Lord Cadvan returned from his wanderings.

And Ifor Anwyl? Not once had he visited the sick man. Nest had remonstrated with him:

"Father, Captain Cadvan has asked to see you. Unfriendly it is that you do not visit the stranger beneath your roof!"

"Well, well," Anwyl answered. "Why should I meet the man whom you have rescued from Trifaen. No good comes from such adventures. The heir of Castell Cadvan is not of our world."

"Your words are hard, father."

"I come from peasant stock," was the quiet reply. "The Cadvans have been owners of the soil, which was tilled by my people for generations. There is a line which divides this man from you as completely as the line that is drawn between East and West. Captain Cadvan happens to be a prisoner of your making. Instead of finding someone who could drive his car to send him back to his people, you brought him here."

Nest had grown very pale whilst Anwyl was speaking. She had never seen him in this frankly inhospitable mood before.

"Father, what has come to you?"

"Captain Cadvan only tolerates us because circumstances have driven him beneath our roof. Do you

think he does not criticise every stone in this old building, every cup from which he drinks, the plain fare that Betti provides ? ”

Nest had now turned from lilies to roses, and she cried out agitatedly :

“ You are unfair to talk like this of the stranger. He isn’t a Saxon, he is of our race for sure. You will not meet him, and yet you judge him ! ”

“ Tut, tut, why all this fuss about a man who is nothing to you ? ”

“ Nothing to me ? ” Nest repeated the words involuntarily, her hands clasped despairingly across her breast.

But Anwyl did not see the agony upon her features, and he went on ruthlessly :

“ Nothing to you, for sure. If you had seen a maimed sheep upon Trifaen, in the same way you would have brought him here. When the Doctor says Captain Cadvan can go, good riddance to him and to all his people.”

For the first time in her life Nest felt acute resentment against her father.

“ You have become a stranger to me,” she cried. “ I am ashamed when Captain Cadvan asks for you. I am tired of making the old excuse, that you are too busy to see him.”

“ When he comes downstairs that will be time enough,” was Anwyl’s quiet answer, “ and sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”

He closed the door abruptly behind him, and he went away in the direction of the shed. Nest was furious with her father. In her heart she called him selfish, callous, callous because he could not see that which she was trying to hide in the innermost depths of her soul. It was Maelgwyn’s virile manhood that attracted

Nest to him on Trifaen. Youth calling to youth, and the warm rush of primeval instincts. Youth demanding youth, the eternal joyous call of the mate for his mate and now. . . . It was the man's helplessness that conquered her. Nest mothered Maelgwyn without embarrassment. But this close intimacy inflamed her passion. She commenced to fear the day when he would be well enough to leave Nant y Glo. What would life be without Maelgwyn—for by that name she secretly thought of him.

Betti watched the growing drama—drama, did I write? Why should the word be altered for romance? Is it not true that drama is more frequently begotten by Love than scented rose leaves, and sugary sentiment? Love is the greatest drama of the universe, it drove Adam and Eve from Eden, as it has driven many more souls from the enchanted garden of delight. Betti knew life better than her young mistress. She had adventures in her youth! He had been a quarryman, she was eighteen, in service with a minister's family. Davydd was ardent and Betti full of life, full-blooded is the term that now frequently covers a woman's indiscretions. She thought of the past when she met Nest face to face after her rather unsatisfactory interview with her father, and Nest seeing the maid's serious expression said irritably:

"Well, what ever is the matter with you? You look as if you had seen a corpse. Is Captain Cadvan worse?"

"He is splendid," Betti replied. "Almost well enough to go to Cadvan." She watched her young mistress carefully when she made this remark, and with a dull sense of coming misfortune she saw the colour fade away from her expressive features.

"There is no need for Captain Cadvan to go to

the Castell until he is quite well," said Nest angrily. "If the extra work is too much for you——"

Betti's Welsh blood flamed up at the unfair taunts. She banged the tray down upon the table so that the crockery-ware clashed together like a clang of cracked bells.

"Well, if you think I am grumbling because there is a bit extra to do, he can live here all the days of his life, and die here for all I care," and with that remark she went out.

Nest stood in the centre of the kitchen with her fingers interlaced, a favourite habit when she was deep in thought. The suggestion from Betti that Maelgwyn was almost well enough to leave Nant y Glo added to her growing fears. Since Maelgwyn had entered into her life Nest's outlook had changed. He had become so dear to her, dearer to her than her father and the old house! She could not decide if she was glad or sorry that this new emotion made her weak with longing, made her grow hot and cold when he held her hands and pleaded for a caress. . . .

The arrival of Howell disturbed her reverie. He favoured her with an ardent impudent glance. He sought to place his arm around her. Nest flushed scarlet. It was not the first time that he had tried to make secret surreptitious love in this manner.

She pushed him away.

"Do you think I am hard up for a sweetheart?" she asked indignantly.

Being a vain man Howell was greatly piqued, for he hated to look small in the eyes of a woman.

"Nest of Nant y Glo can pick or choose her lovers," he retorted bitterly. "But don't look too high, for pride goeth before a fall."

When he entered his patient's room, Maelgwyn was reading a magazine.

"I've ordered a pair of crutches for you," he told him. "Now that your leg is going on so well, and you have recovered from the shock to your system, I shall begin to congratulate myself that you have really turned the corner."

Howell was something of a sportsman. When motoring past Castell Cadvan he had frequently cast an envious eye upon its well-stocked game preserves. But Lord Cadvan gave no work to local doctors, and he was not particularly anxious to associate with his county neighbours. Howell was therefore delighted when a patient in the shape of Lord Cadvan's heir came his way. He was sufficiently egotistical to believe that if Maelgwyn became acquainted with him professionally, the day would come when he would be invited to Cadvan to handle a gun.

"I read in the paper this morning," he remarked affably, "that his Lordship has reached Paris from Madrid. I presume he is on his way home."

Maelgwyn nodded rather impatiently. He had already summed up the doctor chap as an objectionable type of outsider who required to be kept in his place. Howell's grandfather had been an eminently respectable grocer in the neighbourhood in old days, but Howell was the type of individual who endeavoured to ape the customs and manners of his betters. It pleased him to forget that if his grandfather had not been so successful with bacon, the means would not have been forthcoming to enable him to qualify for the medical profession.

"At any rate I'll try and patch you up so that you can get back to Castell Cadvan as quickly as possible, but I shall insist on your going slowly when you get

there. It will be easy for me to motor over to the Castell, much easier than coming up here from Bethesda. It is a deuce of a road, and I am sure," he went on with a deprecating gesture at their surroundings, "that you will be glad to get away from this sort of thing."

"This sort of thing?"

"Well, of course," Howell smiled, "the Anwyls are very worthy people. Anwyl is a genius, but a one horse show. If he went up to London, wore a velvet coat and stuck out his fingers he might be acclaimed the fashion. As it is he is a peasant pure and simple, content to endure this existence. The girl, like her father, is content to run about anyhow. It's been pretty rotten luck for a man of your position to have been dumped down here!"

"I've lived in very much worse quarters than these," Maelgwyn replied irritably. "As for Ifor Anwyl, so far he has not deigned to favour me with a visit, and Miss Anwyl——"

"A deuced fine girl, I admit. Sort we all like as an occasional armful—but a peasant . . ."

There was a sound, and both men turned to see Nest standing in the doorway. For a moment neither one nor the other could take his attention from her. She was endowed with such compelling charm that she wrested admiration from the most unimpressionable of men.

"I am not ashamed of my birth," she said quietly, "although I have heard such a story about a man who comes from Bethesda!"

She walked across the room and placed a telegram in Maelgwyn's hand.

"It has just come, thought you might like to see it," and without waiting she abruptly left them.

This indeed was an unlucky day. Nest quivered with anger and outraged pride. She had had words with her father and with Betti. She had heard Howell's vulgar disparaging remark . . . her blood tingled with shame. . . . She passed out and made her way across the bridge.

CHAPTER VII

JESTYN'S MASTERPIECE

LIKE most women of the principality, Nest was warm-hearted and emotional. She came of a fearless people. A people that had overcome adversity, and turned barren earth into fruitful pastures. These hardy Celts knew no other country but wild Cambria. No other mountain-girt valley but their own. No sky but the one above them, dark and fearsome when overcast by raging tempests. Cradled in a world of storms, they inherited the turbulent characteristics of the atmosphere in which they dwelt, and so even to this day the descendants of these people have the same temperament, passionate in their love and merciless in their hate.

At the moment it was the turbulent side of Nest's nature that dominated. It drove her from Nant y Glo over the rugged slopes that led her past a spot where centuries ago a rich vein of copper was discovered, beyond the hollow of the Blue Pool, near the foot of Clogwyn y Garnedd. Little rills trickled down from the gullies in the hills, little rills that in storms became rushing torrents dangerous to life and limb. The Crib Coch gleamed out like bronze in the sunlight. The quartz glittered on the mountain sides like jewels in a regalia. She sank down on the grass, when suddenly she heard a man shout out :

“ Nest ! ”

She knew the sound of the voice. It belonged to Lewis Jestyn, the old artist who lived a few miles away from Nant y Glo, in a rustic house made of great blocks of unchiselled stones and decorated with shells. It was called “ Ugly House ” by the natives.

Lewis Jestyn was a short stunted man with a closely cropped reddish brown beard. An uneven moustache fell over his large good-natured mouth. His bald head was crested with a tuft of red hair which gave him the appearance of a satyr. When painting, he had a habit of screwing up his eyes and pursing his lips. He wore old brown knickerbockers and a faded brown velvet coat. His felt hat was worn with the brim turned down. When at work he sat on a three legged camp stool, with his wooden paint box resting on his knees, the lid of which when open formed an easel for his canvas. It had become his habit to talk to himself or sing as he worked. To intrigue Nest, he broke out into :

“ Crawshay Bailey had an engine,
And he couldn't make it go,
So he pulled it by a string
All the way to Nant y Glo.

Wass you effer see ? Wass you effer see ?
Wass you effer see such a jolly time before.”

The anger died away from Nest's heart. Her resentment against the King of Snobs from Bethesda, as she secretly labelled Howell, died away. She was fond of the artist. She took up the refrain of the Welsh doggerel and before she reached Jestyn, he was beating time with his paint brush on the lid of his box to the words :

“ Crawshay Bailey's sister Bella
She have got a fine umbrella.
And she thinks so much about it
That she won't go out without it.”

and Jestyn joined in the refrain :

“ Wass you effer see ? Wass you effer see ?
Wass you effer see, such a jolly time before.”

“ That’s a fine painting,” said Nest, when she reached him. “ The blue lake and the sky and——”

“ Stand there just as you are,” cried Jestyn, “ and make it perfect, little witch.”

“ I’m not a witch, but a peasant,” Nest retorted with a laugh, still smarting from the doctor’s taunt. “ I won’t be painted in my old clothes. If you want to paint me at all, Mister Jestyn bach, let me put on my best clothes, my new hat, my new coat.”

“ Ah ! girl fach,” he cried despairingly, for he had often argued this point with Nest. “ You don’t want fashionable clothes, but the simplest ones to set you off. No fine feathers required to make you a fine bird.”

Nest shook her head.

“ Oh, Mister Jestyn, one day paint a nice picture of me in my new hat ? ”

Very carefully Jestyn dropped another canvas panel into the slots in the lid of his box. “ Let me make a rough study of your head just as you are now, little maid. And then when you come and have tea with me one day, I’ll make you look like a smart lady from London.”

“ Promise,” Nest cried.

“ Well indeed, when did Lewis Jestyn break his word ? ”

Nest allowed him to pose her as he wished.

“ You may talk,” said the artist. “ I want to get your vivacious expression.”

“ Tell me about India.”

Jestyn was squeezing some carmine out of a tube on to his palette. He could not resist the colour of Nest’s cloak against her hair.

"Dear me, why India?" he asked in surprise.

"Oh, I don't know," Nest replied hesitatingly. "but I know someone from India."

"White or black?" asked Jestyn.

"White, of course."

"Oh, don't get so uppish, about colour," Jestyn grinned. "I once painted a native princess without her veil," he chuckled. "If her father had known, he would have killed one of us. She was so fair that they called her Motibae the Pearl."

"Oh, do tell me about her?"

Desirous of keeping her alert expression he told a story that had never fallen from his lips before.

"I was sitting in the residency grounds at Handinugger painting an old temple, when I heard the sound of a woman's gold anklets. I looked up and saw a veiled woman. She had come to meet somebody. I found out that she was the Princess Motibae disguised as Anandi the Rajah's favourite dancing girl. She had come surreptitiously to visit the Resident, with whom she had an intrigue. Anandi was used by the Rajah as a spy to find out the policy and aims of the Resident. Hearing of this the princess bribed the dancing girl to allow her to take her place. Just as I found inspiration in you to-day, when you came towards me like the star of the morning, so this Indian woman inspired me. Mistaking me for her lover, she threw her veil aside crying: 'O, Moon of my innermost soul!' She discovered her mistake too late. I swore that I would give her secret away to the Rajah unless she would allow me to paint her, so the princess became my model."

"What a story," cried Nest. "But cruel you were to the princess, and where is the picture?"

"I am still working at it," Jestyn answered, "and one day it will become my masterpiece."

Nest sighed: "I should like to see it."

Jestyn did not answer for some time. He had become engrossed with his subject. Nest lived on the canvas, Jestyn had caught her smiling mischievous expression. He had lost himself in his work, but as was his custom he sang doggerel verses which kept Nest interested.

An hour passed. A chill wind sprang up, and Jestyn cried out:

"Ten minutes, little girl, just ten minutes, and then I shall be satisfied."

"It is getting late," Nest protested. "I must go home."

"Ten minutes, little girl," begged Jestyn excitedly. "If you leave me now you will undo all the morning's work, come along, sing a song with me."

He began to hum and Nest joined in. The words kept the smile on her lips.

"Crawshay Bailey went to camp
And he found it very damp,
So he went and took some whisky
But it made him very frisky.

Wass you effer see? Wass you effer see?
Wass you effer see such a jolly time before."

"There, that's fine, splendid. Hope I may be able to do you a good turn one day."

Nest studied the painting. "Why, it looks as if it is alive!"

"Shame to put a hat on that wonderful hair," said Jestyn proudly.

"Well, yes—perhaps—if you say so. But you promised, you know, you promised to paint me wearing my hat," Nest persisted. "You said Lewis Jestyn never breaks his word."

"But in the interests of art——"

"Cheat, cheat. I will destroy the painting," Nest teased.

"You would not destroy the masterpiece of an old man?"

"Ah, ah, all your paintings are masterpieces. What about Motibae the Pearl?"

"Don't repeat that story, there's a good girl," he begged. "When the picture is exhibited I want it to be a surprise to the world."

It was late afternoon when Nest reached Nant y Glo. She met her father on the threshold.

"You are getting too old to wander about like this," he said reprovingly. "Young Cadvan has been asking for you. I had to leave my work to tell the man that although you had been good to him, and had wasted many precious hours in his service, that he could not regard you as his servant."

"Oh, father bach, you were not unkind to him," Nest cried anxiously.

"Oh, no, not at all unkind," Anwyl answered. "All the same, he is not the type of man I wish to see loitering about Nant y Glo. Within the week Howell tells me, if all goes well, Captain Cadvan may use his crutches, and then it will be easy enough to get him to Castell Cadvan."

Nest's face darkened, and as she made her way to Maelgwyn's room, she knew that of a truth she could never forget him. When she entered he was lying on a sofa looking out upon Trifaen just as Nest had done countless times before. He recognised the sound of her footsteps. He had waited for her through long tedious hours, illness makes the strongest man peevish, and now like a spoilt child he adopted a sulky manner.

"You've been climbing the mountains again?" He did not attempt to hide the reproach in his tones.

"Well, indeed, I am sorry that I was so long away."

He turned and stared at her. The keen air had given her a wonderful colour, the exercise had brought a sparkle to her eyes, the freshness of her caught him in a whirlwind, his impatient anger died away.

"Was it because of what that bounder Howell said," Maelgwyn asked, "that you deserted me? If it hadn't been for this confounded accident, I should have got up and punched his head."

There was a slight pause.

"You mean his remark about my being a peasant?"

"Contemptible beast," Maelgwyn growled.

"I am not ashamed of being a peasant," said Nest. "But it is the man himself I cannot stand at all. I have met him more than once when I have been shopping in Bethesda with Betti. I did not like his ways. All the same," she added with a toss of her dark curls, "what indeed to goodness does it matter what the man says, if only you get well?"

"Do you care a hang whether I get well or not?"

"Why of course," Nest retorted. "It is sad to see an able-bodied man stricken so suddenly."

"Do you remember that evening on Trifaen, I said that one can never repeat a good thing twice. Even when you and I stood side by side gazing across the hills and the valleys, and watching the mists advancing towards us, I had a feeling that at best our joy was only transitory. You notice I say *our* joy," he went on earnestly, "because I could swear that at that moment you and I experienced the same emotion."

"Well, yes indeed, it is true," Nest admitted. "But why talk in this dreary way? Your leg will soon be well and then we can climb Trifaen again,

maybe not quite to the top but pleasant it is on the slopes, and there are many easier mountains to climb."

"You remember bringing me a telegram this morning?"

The girl nodded.

"It was from the butler at Castell Cadvan. My uncle reaches home to-morrow. He is old, nervy, erratic. I don't want to write to explain about this accident, he will imagine that it is heaps worse than it is, besides I want an excuse for him to see you. Do you know why?" He caught her hand and pressed his warm lips lingeringly upon it.

"I cannot say," Nest faltered.

"I will tell you later, when I am well, when I have spoken to my uncle, when we sit on the grassy slopes of Trifaen. I want him to know that I am going on alright, and directly Howell says I may be moved I'll return to the Castell. Davy can drive my car now. He can drive you to Cadvan. Don't know how he managed to learn. Did a bit of driving in France he tells me. Got up early and tried to master the mechanism of the car when Hew and Betti were sleeping soundly."

"When do you want me to deliver your message?"

"The day after to-morrow," said Maelgwyn. "But don't let the gay old dog make love to you!"

"You need not be afraid of that," answered Nest, with a tremulous laugh, "I expect I shall be nervous, but if you want me to go, well I will do as you wish. And now how can I take that tired look from your face, boy bach?" she asked with an effort at lightness.

"If you would bring your harp and sing to me——"

"Come and have some tea, Miss Nest," cried Betti, coming up the stairs.

"After a little song or two," Nest answered. "Ah,

Betti, don't be cross. I'm going to Castell Cadvan to see Captain Cadvan's uncle ;" she put her arm around Betti's shoulders and she said coaxingly, "Iron my frock for me, there's a pet, and next week I will go with you to Bethesda."

"Well, well, if I get my wages in advance," said Betti slightly mollified. "I should be glad if you would take me to Jones, the tailor. I want a coat that will make me thin, thin, thin." Betti held out her hands and put them palms together about an inch apart, to show the amount of slimness she wished to acquire in Jones' tailor's coat.

"Don't bother about your wages," Maelgwyn interrupted, "you have been very kind to me Betti." He brought a case out of his pocket and held out a five pound note to her.

Her brown skin reddened. This was taking an unfair advantage of a girl with an eye for a prospective husband. Besides Hew had been training Taffy for the sheep dog trials at Llandair, and he had already made a suggestion that Betti should accompany him on this important occasion.

"Why this hesitation?" Maelgwyn asked. "I know you don't like me, Betti. I take up too much of your mistress's time. I have placed temptation in the path of Davy, he was half an hour late in milking the cows this morning. In fact I am a beast all the way round, and I've given you heaps more work."

"Tut, tut, man, I like work," Betti frowned. "If you don't make Miss Nest here unhappy, that's all my fear."

Nest flared up angrily.

"You must be out of your senses, to talk in that fashion. How could Captain Cadvan make me unhappy?"

"Let me make friends with Betti," begged Maelgwyn. "I hope to see her in Mr. Jones's latest creation before long," and he pressed the five pound note into her unwilling hand.

"Miss Nest has no mother, that is why I must guard her," she said sullenly. "I know the day will come when my little mistress will hate me because I try to save her."

Nest put her arms around her.

"You are talking nonsense, Betti dear. Don't you see that all this is very upsetting for Captain Cadvan?"

"Well, well, hap my tongue runs away with me sometimes. Love is a breaker of hearts, that is why I am forty without a husband," and recovering some of her light banter, she added, "but Jones's coat will set that right for sure."

When she had gone Nest drew a chair before the harp, and she ran her fingers lightly over the strings. Maelgwyn saw that she was perturbed and decided to say nothing until she recovered her composure again. She played several Welsh airs, "Lady Mine," "Men of Harlech," the soft soothing strains of "Mentra Gwen." Maelgwyn shaded his eyes with his hand. At such moments he felt exalted by Nest's music. She commenced to sing one of the old Welsh ballads by Rhys that Maelgwyn loved so well:

"Before you sail, sweet sailor
I'll whistle to the south,
And the sea wind shall be softer
Than honey in the mouth.

The mountains shall stand closer
To keep away the storm,
And the southern sun shall, sweetheart,
The wind till it be warm."

When she had finished, for a few moments Maelgwyn

could not speak. He did not wish to come down to earth, for the spell of her voice enchanted him.

"It is beautiful," he said, and he held out his hand: "Come to me."

She could not resist his appeal. If he had been able to come to her she might have done so, as it was she went across to him and knelt at his side. He bent over her and kissed her on the mouth. That kiss, how it thrilled her! She trembled when he placed his hand rather roughly upon her head.

"How can I hide things away from you, when every action of mine proclaims what I seek to hide by words? Voltaire or some such fellow knew what he was talking about when he said that speech was given to conceal thought. I did not believe that I could love another woman until I met you!"

Nest looked up sharply.

"Another woman?"

"What is the use of my pretending that I am not a man of the world at twenty-seven? I am a man, and if I don't tell you about myself, perhaps my uncle will do so."

Nest was very pale and she was clasping and unclasping her brown fingers as was her custom when she was seriously upset.

"Do you still love this girl?"

"My God, not now that I have met you!"

"She was beautiful?"

Maelgwyn hesitated for a few minutes before he said, "Yes, one of the beauties of the season."

"Why didn't you marry her?"

"I was wretchedly poor, a subaltern struggling along on a rotten allowance, my elder brother—er, I forget, you did not know that I had an elder brother, Idwal, he was killed at Mons. She pretended to care

for me no end. I was on the Staff at Simla at the time we became engaged. I was crazy about her. Every man in the station thought I was no end of a lucky devil. Then an enormously wealthy member of Parliament, came out to study the Indian question. I believe after six weeks travelling he considered himself competent to write a book and instruct all district officials on their duty. He met Lady Morvyth Pryse, that was the girl to whom I was engaged, proposed to her and she couldn't resist his money. I saw blue for a time, played hell with everything. They were married in the Cathedral in Bombay. A week later Idwal was killed"

"And you've never seen her since?"

"No."

"But perhaps deep in your heart, boy bach, you still care for her?"

He looked down and saw that her eyes were filled with tears. Maelgwyn threw his arms around her, and her head lay upon his heart, and she felt it throbbing so mightily as she lay against him, that it was as if there was a falcon beneath his coat ready to take flight.

"My little love, there is no one deep down in my heart but you. Never again shall there be anyone in my heart but you. We belong to each other, soul for soul. Nobody on earth shall part us"

She lay motionless, entrancingly happy within his arms, for some time. They heard the sound of footsteps on the stairs and Nest, with a quivering sigh broke away from the embrace she loved. She got up to put her harp away, and a few minutes later Betti came in with papers for Maelgwyn.

"Better go down to your supper, Miss Nest fach. A bad storm has come on. Mister Jestyn has been

painting up in the hills, and he was going along on his tricycle when he was caught in the rain. The master is in, too."

Betti stared suspiciously at Nest's flushed, radiant face, and on the narrow staircase that led down into the kitchen, she paused and threw her arms in her impulsive way around the woman.

"Keep my secret, Betti fach. I am so happy I could cry with joy. He loves me, loves me, do you hear? Am I not a lucky girl?"

"He told you that he loved you?" Betti cried. "Well, indeed, that's fine, and the wedding, when is the wedding to be?"

There was a slight pause and Nest laughed gaily.

"How quickly you rush ahead, Betti. Why indeed, you think of nothing but births, marriages and deaths."

"The man who says he loves Nest Anwyl must marry her," said Betti firmly. "Many men speak of love to a woman, but few speak of marriage."

"Well, indeed to goodness, are you trying to insult Captain Cadvan?" said Nest warmly. "Of course, we shall be married. Why that is what love is for," she whispered exultantly. "Marriage and happiness!"

CHAPTER VIII

SHELTER FOR THE NIGHT

IFOR ANWYL sat at the table in the parlour cutting thin slices of pickled pork on to a willow pattern plate. He was at a standstill with his sculptured group, the shepherd bending over the dead lamb. Luck was with him to-night, the storm had driven his one friend for shelter beneath his roof. Jestyn, with his strange Don Quixote outlook upon the world was the only man welcomed to Nant y Glo.

"Did Nest tell you I met her at the Blue Lake to-day," Jestyn asked, when she came into the room.

"Well, no indeed."

"For the first time in her life," chuckled Jestyn, "I made her stand still and I painted her!"

"Tut, tut, Nest," frowned Anwyl, "why did you not tell me it was Lewis Jestyn who kept you? I am glad she did something to oblige a friend of mine. All her spare time lately has been taken up with a man who broke his leg on Trifaen. They brought him here after the accident. We could not turn him away."

"Very tiresome, indeed, for you," Jestyn admitted, helping himself to a piece of Betti's home made bread. "Who is he?"

Nest was about to answer, but her father surprised her by a warning glance, as he made the swift retort:

"Just a stranger wandering about to wrest secrets from our old hills."

The storm increased in violence, and Betti put a match to the fire. The two men pulled their chairs up to the bright glow, and because of the manner in which her father had made a warning sign to her, Nest did not dare to return to Maelgwyn. She comforted herself by the thought that Betti would have drawn the cretonne curtains across the windows of his room, the candles would be lit, and Maelgwyn would smoke his pipe and read until he fell asleep. Nest's mind was given up to thoughts of her lover. She found her knitting, socks with which she kept her father well supplied. And as her needles clicked, her father and Jestyn talked of the business that most concerned their lives, art, and the values of colour. Jestyn warmed to his subject and suddenly he looked at his watch and said :

"Dear me it is late, I must get back home."

Anwyl got up and pulled a curtain aside. Rain and sleet were sweeping across the window pane.

"Tut, tut, man, not fit for you to go out to-night. Not fit for a dog," Anwyl remonstrated. "Nest will make you a shakedown on the sofa yonder, and in the morning you will be near to your work."

"Well indeed, that is very kind of you. I'll just see to my tricycle, and I'll be back before you can say Jack Robinson. By the bye, who was Jack Robinson, Nest?" and he disappeared, singing :

"Crawshay Bailey went to camp
And he found it very damp.
So he went and had some whisky
But it made him very frisky.

Wass you effer see? Wass you effer see?
Wass you effer see such a jolly time before."

They heard the door close, Nest smiled to herself. The old round house that once upon a time had

sheltered the cattle, had become a garage. There was Maelgwyn's car and now it sheltered Jestyn's shabby tricycle.

"When is the man going?" Anwyl asked when he was alone with his daughter.

"What man?"

"Captain Cadvan."

"Oh, father bach," cried Nest, "why is it that you hate him so much and I like—I——"

"Don't speak of it," Anwyl answered hoarsely. His manner was awesome. In this stern harsh mood, Anwyl was almost a stranger to his daughter. She could not bear to look upon him, and she covered her face with her hands.

"You went to see him to-day. He told me so."

"Because he sent me a note, saying that he did not consider it right to stay here without payment."

"Well, why not, we are not rich, Betti says the prices are high for food, and the fowls have not been laying well."

"I would not take payment from a Cadvan if I were starving," Anwyl declared. "I went to him and said: 'Nant y Glo is not a boarding house.' I told him that he was my guest, but that you were not his servant, that you were kind to him, just as if he were a maimed animal."

"I do not understand you. I know you do not like strangers. But you were always kind, and now you are harsh and cruel to the man I love."

There was a tense pause.

"The man you love?" Anwyl repeated scornfully. "I would rather have seen you dead before me, than have heard that confession!"

"Father," cried Nest in a choked voice, holding out

her hands imploringly towards him. "Why make me sad?"

"When is he going, answer me that question?" was Anwyl's harsh reply. "If he does not mend soon and leave this place, one night I shall go into his room, and old man that I am, I will carry him down the stairs and leave him like a destitute tramp by the wayside."

A bright spot of fury glowed on Nest's quivering features.

"The day after to-morrow I am going to Castell Cadvan. Davy will drive me there in Captain Cadvan's car. I am going to tell Lord Cadvan of the accident, and then directly Doctor Howell says that Maelgwyn can be moved, he will be taken home."

Anwyl stared at her with a dazed expression. "You—you are going to see Lord Cadvan," he asked, "you are taking your life into your own hands." His head dropped on to his chest and he muttered in a low voice, "Oh, God, and to think that Myfanwy should have given her life for this child, this child who is bringing sorrow upon me in my old age."

"Father, father, you will break my heart."

He turned upon her wildly.

"I forbid you to go to Lord Cadvan."

"Don't say that, anything but that," she cried. "I have a reason, a great reason for wishing to go, besides I would take a message for anyone who is hurt like Maelgwyn."

"That strange man is to come between you and me after all these years," Anwyl remonstrated bitterly.

"No man shall come between us," Nest replied, taking her father's hand within her own. "Tell me yourself that I may go and see Lord Cadvan."

There was silence for some minutes whilst Anwyl fought out the secret battle with himself.

"Very well, I will withdraw my order that you are not to go to Castell Cadvan," he said quietly, "but I must give you a warning. If you do so you will regret it all the days of your life."

"Why?"

"I will say no more," he answered, "only I have given you a warning. I will leave it at that."

Nest went out into the kitchen, and she sent a message by Betti to Davy, telling him to get petrol for their journey, but whilst she was talking, Davy himself came in. He was drenched to the skin.

"Well, indeed, I hope we shall have a better day than this," he remarked taking off his coat.

But the tempest does not rage indefinitely in wild Wales, nor the forked lightning constantly illuminate rough clefts of rock, and wild hillside. Storms quickly die away, and the sky clears and the dreary scene becomes fair and beautiful as the sun breaks through dark clouds, and sets a golden gleam upon many a lake and fussy stream.

"It will be a fine day for Cadvan right enough," said Nest, peering out into the storm. She loved her native land equally in sunshine and shadow. Suddenly she remembered Jestyn, and she hurried to her father, and the tension was relieved between them, when she said:

"Wherever is Jestyn. Did you not ask him to stay the night here, it is not fit for him to go out!"

Anwyl looked up from the paper that he was reading.

"Well yes, indeed, of course. He went to see about his tricycle."

"I will ask Hew if he has seen him." Nest went back to the kitchen, Betti was removing Hew's wet coat, and reproving him for the little rivulets of water that were running from his coarse breeches and legg-

ings and staining the spotless purity of the red kitchen tiles.

In answer to Nest's question, Hew said :

" Well yes, indeed, he came into the round house singing Crawshay Bailey, and he went off on his tri-cycle."

Whilst they were talking, there was a knock upon the door, and the missing man stood before them, with a brown paper parcel under his arm.

" Wherever have you been ? " cried Nest in astonishment. " Father wanted you to stay here for the night. It isn't fit for you to go home through this storm."

" Very wise of your father too," retorted Jestyn smiling, taking off his hat, and to Betti's horror shaking off the rain drops that had gathered upon the brim.

" I just ran home for my nightshirt and slippers," and he made his way to the parlour. " Wass you effer, wass you effer see such a jolly time before," he cried slapping Anwyl on the back.

CHAPTER IX

"SHADY ISLAND"

BETTI placed Nest's carefully ironed frock at the foot of the bed.

"Fit for a princess!" she remarked with pride.

"There is nobody in the world who has such a kind heart as you, Betti dear," Nest answered enthusiastically.

She took her bath in the primitive tub at the far corner of the room. She brushed out her hair until it showed a luxuriant glossiness, and when she visited Maelgwyn before she set forth on her journey, he held out his hands and said admiringly:

"Little love, come to me."

He kissed her rapturously. When he released her there was a shadow on Nest's face. Her father's antagonism towards this man who was so dear to her, troubled her. She said anxiously:

"Boy bach, you will not be very angry with me, if I say something to you?"

Maelgwyn laughed.

"Could I ever be angry with you, in the words of Davy, 'say your think!'"

"Do not tell my father of our love, keep it quiet for a while. For such a long time he has had no one to care for but me. I have an idea that he would be grieved if I shared my love with another."

"I will keep our secret, besides it wouldn't be fair either to you, to him, or to me if I did otherwise."

A puzzled look came over Nest's features.

“Fair? I know not what you mean.”

“Why worry ourselves with phantoms which will never exist?” he answered cautiously.

“Then you will not tell my father that you love me until I say you can do so?”

“I promise.”

“That's a good boy.”

“No man in the world could resist you.”

“You make me feel very proud.”

Maelgwyn laughed :

“It suits you to be proud, as you call it.”

“Compliments again, dear boy,” Nest smiled. “But I must not listen to any more of your flattery or I shall not get to the Castell before midnight!”

Anwyl would not see his daughter before she departed. He shut himself up in his shed, and Nest heard the sound of his chisel when she passed through the garden.

Davy was dressed in his Sabbath clothes in honour of the occasion. In his grey check cap he had tucked a shoot of green ivy. Hew and Betti helped him to wheel the car across the rustic bridge.

“You know the way?” Nest asked anxiously.

“Well, yes,” Davy answered, “the Captain pointed it out to me on a map.”

And soon they were running along a road which curved through winding hills. The slopes were covered in purple heather, and a river flowed beneath the mountains. In the verdant valley sheep and cattle browsed. Later the river assumed the character of a mountain torrent, a stream of silver leaping over rocks, tufted with soft masses of vivid green moss. The car rushed onwards, past the waters of the beautiful lake Cwellyn where the scenery becomes like the Swiss

Alps. Snowdon's sons: Moel Erlir and Castell Cedwm, arose on the left, past the Wolf's Castle and Drwys y Coed, which in English is the door of the wood, and beyond past Bala den-Lyn, where in 1284, Edward I lived for some days. . . . The highlands of Anglesea began to appear, and later the whole island lay like a raised map before them, and the elegant towers of Carnarvon Castle showed in the distance. At last they crossed the mighty bridge which spans the Menai Straits, and now Nest was in the romantic island of Anglesea, Anglesea the ancient scene of pillage and bloodshed. Anglesea, known as Ynys Dowyll, or Shady Island by the ancient Britons. Once the abode of powerful druids, who were later outraged and slain by the Romans under Julius Agricola, an Island devastated by an English army in the reign of Rufus the Red, blood-soaked in the twelfth century when Cadwalader and his nephew Howel waged war. Anglesea, the abode of kings, the battle ground of human ambitions. Desolated by the Irish in 1245, who were later driven back to their ships by the infuriated inhabitants. And on a day Edward I became the deadly foe of the Islanders, crossing the Straits by a bridge of boats, he attacked the Welsh Army under Llewelyn ap Gryffydd and to-day? Anglesea is a fair peaceful jewel set in the Irish sea, and the Menai Straits.

Nest and Davy swept by Glen Naidr, a spot where once a princely palace stood, and where Druid glass rings, which were used by the druids as charms, have frequently been found. The mountains faded away in the distance beyond the Straits. The boy and girl made their way inland, and later they came to the coast again. Davy pointed out Castell Cadvan in the distance. Behind was a dark wood, a parapeted wall

ran below as a defence to the sea. Along the top of the wall was a terrace and sloping lawns. Great gates opened upon a well-wooded avenue. Near by was a grove that was in old days sacred to druidical worship. Nest was a little afraid when she saw the octagonal turrets rising from the basement above the embattled parapet. The front of the Castell had mullioned windows and a Gothic wall.

In answer to Nest's request to see Lord Cadvan, a young footman politely told her that his lordship was out.

“That is very tiresome,” Nest cried. “I wish to see him on a very urgent matter. Will it be long before he returns?”

“It is difficult to say,” the man answered. “In any case it is unlikely that his lordship will see anyone on his return. He has a house-party, Miss. Besides he never sees anyone without an appointment.”

Nest turned sadly away. There was a lonely air about the place, an air of inhospitality that chilled her, and at this moment her father's warning came to her mind: “If you go to Castell Cadvan you will regret it all the days of your life!”

How disappointed Maelgwyn would be when she returned without seeing his uncle!

“It is no good,” said Nest to Davy. “We have had a journey for nothing. Lord Cadvan is out, so we shall have to return the way we came.” She got into the car, Davy was chuckling to himself:

“Well, neffer mind, Miss Nest fach, we can come again another day!”

“But it's a long way,” Nest protested.

“Yes, yes, but champion practice for me with the driving.”

They were running smoothly down a hill, when without warning the car stopped abruptly.

"This is very awkward," Davy admitted, getting out of the car, "cannot make the old thing go for nuts."

He opened the bonnet and tried to persuade the engine to start, but with no effect. "Wish I knew a little more about her!" Davy groaned.

Half an hour passed, and then Nest ventured desperately:

"You stay here and I will walk along the road and try and get help."

Davy, very hot and discomfited, agreed to this proposal. Nest passed several country carts on their way to Beaumaris. One or two motor cycles whizzed past her, but no one in a car who could help her. Along a road to the left she saw an old gamekeeper leaning over a massive wrought-iron gate. He was admiring the scene. The Straits, and beyond, the sea. Penmaenmawr and Penmaenbach and Llandudno, a narrow strip of land, guarded on the right by the Little Orme, and on the left by the Great Orme, which once again after a century has become the haunt of the peregrine falcon.

Hearing footsteps, the gamekeeper turned his head and he regarded the girl with interest.

"Do you know anyone who could attend to a motor for me? Davy, the boy who is driving it, does not know much about cars, he knows more about pigs," cried Nest.

"That is very useful knowledge," the old man answered. "You are a very pretty little maid."

Nest flushed, for although the man was old, his admiring glance was somewhat disconcerting. He was clean-shaven, with thin compressed lips. He wore a dark blue shirt and a red handkerchief was twisted like a stock beneath his chin. Upon his head he wore an old corduroy hat. A coat of the same material covered

his body. He wore corded breeches, thick country boots and leggings, all worn, faded by sun and storm. He spoke in Welsh and Nest replied to him in her native tongue.

“I do not ask strangers to pay me compliments.”

“No, I am sure you don’t,” the man replied. “But why regard me as a stranger? At least I am not a ‘sais’ (Englishman).”

“You will not help me,” Nest sighed. “I am sorry that I troubled you.” She stared at him in astonishment when he burst out:

“Stand still. How dare you try to slip away. I did not force myself on you. You spoke to me. Come and sit by my side and talk to me, then maybe I will help you, and the car that brought you here shall be made to go.”

A little afraid, Nest cowered away from him.

“No, no indeed, Davy will be anxious. I must get back to him.”

“In any case you have wandered away from the main road,” said the man. “This is private property belonging to a devil, named Cadvan, nicknamed the Coch Brenin, the Red King, by everybody around here.”

“That is very strange,” Nest hastened to explain. “I came to try and find him. I have come from Nant y Glo. They told me at the Castell that he was out with the guns, that there were people staying at his place, that I could not see him to-day.”

“People often try and get subscriptions out of him for chapels and sheep trials.”

“Oh, well indeed, you know him then?” Nest interrupted.

“Since I was a boy,” the man answered.

“You are his gamekeeper?”

"Pity that I give myself away in this manner. I would like the poachers to think I am just a loafing farmer, or a cattle dealer!"

Again Nest turned to go.

"Stupid for you to leave this road if you have come all the way from Nant y Glo to see Lord Cadvan," the gamekeeper remonstrated. "Some time ago I heard that he was tired of shooting. He never enjoys anything for long at a stretch."

"That is very sad," Nest was deeply interested.

"There is at least one thing wherein the gamekeeper and Lord Cadvan are alike," the man went on carelessly, "they both like a pretty face. You are afraid of me, silly of you! You are a trespasser on private land. I do not threaten to prosecute you, although at the corner of the road there is a notice-board whereupon it is written for all to see, that trespassers will be prosecuted."

"I did not notice it. I was only anxious to get back," Nest said apologetically.

"Girl fach, we'll say no more about it, besides even gamekeepers have hearts. I once loved a maid, and when I saw you standing, hesitating, I thought 'I'll do all in my power to make her come my way. She is so like my old sweetheart.'"

"Why then did you not marry her?" Nest asked sympathetically, for did she not know all about love, its joys, its agonies?

"I should like to tell you a story. Not so far away there is a romantic spot that always has a fascination for me. It was there that Princess Joan, the wife of Llewelyn fell in love with William, a knight, taken prisoner by her lord in battle, and to put it very boldly girl fach, their love was consummated. . . . On a day the knight was liberated by ransom, but when

Llewelyn heard of the treachery of his enemy, whom he had trusted as a friend, he devised a plan of revenge. The knight was invited to pay a visit to him. On arrival he was cast into a dungeon. A gallows was erected in a dell below the Castle. Llewelyn asked his princess what she would give for a sight of her lover :

“Lovely princess, said Llewelyn,
What would you give to see your William ?
Wales and England and Llewelyn,
I freely give to see my William.’

That was her traditional answer,” the gamekeeper chuckled.

“Oh, what happened,” cried Nest anxiously. In Wales the art of story telling still survives. On many a dark winter’s night, country people gather around the fireside and relate old tales and legends.

“Llewelyn took Joan to the window and showed her the gallows where the knight was hung. It gratified his lust for revenge to make the thing he loved suffer.”

Nest smiled at the whimsical way in which the gamekeeper told his fantastic story.

“And now,” said he persuasively, “come inside this gate. Any minute his lordship will pass this way. I will hasten along the road and explain things to the boy who drove you to Castell Cadvan.”

“But if you are not with me, how shall I know Lord Cadvan ?” Nest cried anxiously as she passed through the gateway.

“There is something different about a peer to the ordinary person. You couldn’t mistake him ! It is said that the Red King is a real aristocrat of the old school.”

Nest watched her new friend turn off along the road where Davy was waiting in the car. She threw herself upon the grass, looking eagerly towards the dark

woods in the distance, hoping that her patience would be rewarded by the arrival of Lord Cadvan. At last there was a rustle in the trees and the game-keeper came towards her.

"Well, well, no luck yet?" he asked. "I found Davy. A man is helping him with the car. Are you tired of waiting for Coch Brenin?"

"Well, yes indeed," Nest confessed. "But what is the good of making a fuss about it. It is no use my going back if there is a chance of seeing Lord Cadvan."

"Let us have another story or two to while away the time," suggested her friend. "What did you think of the legend of Llewelyn and Joan?"

"He was cruel," Nest declared, "cruel and revengeful."

"That is the reason why I told you the story. Lord Cadvan belongs to the same type."

"What made him cruel? Was a woman false to him?"

"Well, yes indeed, that is why it has become a religion to him, to stamp happiness out of his life and happiness out of the lives of all those who cross his path. That is why Cadvan has become a castle of gloom."

"I am very glad that I met you," Nest admitted, although she added cautiously, "although you are only repeating gossip! People often say the worst they can of their neighbours, that is why it is better to value a good friend more than a crowd of admirers."

"You are lucky to have learnt that truth so early in life!"

"It was a warning that my father gave to me when I was very small."

"Oh, oh, so your father had his fingers burnt by

his neighbours like the rest of us. What manner of life does he lead ? ”

“ He does not like strangers. It has made it very difficult for me. That is why I have come to see Lord Cadvan. His nephew met with an accident on Trifaen.”

“ Trifaen ? ”

“ It is a mountain not far away from where I live. Captain Cadvan’s leg was broken, and he was brought to my home, Nant y Glo, and there he has been for weeks.”

“ And you ? ” Overhanging eyebrows almost obscured the old man’s keen eyes.

“ Well, indeed to goodness,” Nest confessed, “ I nursed him.”

“ And fell in love with him ? ”

Nest laughed tremulously. “ Why should I fall in love with him ? ”

“ Natural, would it not be, girl fach ? I have seen Captain Cadvan about these parts, a handsome stripling. Just such a son as Lord Cadvan might have possessed, had he married. Possibly that is why it is rumoured that there is not much love lost between uncle and nephew. Anyway, why did you come on this errand ? Captain Cadvan could have written.”

“ Yes, that is true,” Nest admitted, “ but he wished me to come.”

“ And your father ? ”

“ He was very angry. He is a sculptor. He shuts himself up in his shed and when he is working even I may not enter without permission. Like Lord Cadvan, he is a hard man. Too much love made him unhappy. My mother died when I was born. Perhaps you have not heard of the tomb at Nant y Glo ? ”

“ Tell me about it.”

Nest described the beauty of Anwyl's masterpiece.

"Will you do me a favour and take me there one day?"

"It is many, many miles from here. Away in the mountains."

"Yes, that may be, but I should like to see this tomb of sorrow."

"If you come to Nant y Glo one day, I will meet you there."

"That is a promise. As you liked the legend of Joan and Llewelyn, shall I tell you Lord Cadvan's story? It will help you to understand him better when you meet him."

"I should like to hear it very much."

"When he was a young man he fell in love with one of the beauties of the county, and later he became her accepted lover. One night there was a ball at the County Hall, and Cadvan took a house-party from the Castell, which included the girl he loved, his future wife. At the ball he met a poor man whom he had frequently befriended, and he introduced him to his guests and to the woman of his choice. Cadvan had met the man at Eisteddfodau, he came of humble people in the mountains. 'Join my party,' he said to his friend, and later he invited him on a visit to the Castell. But on the night of the ball, the girl who was dearer to Cadvan than life, fell in love with his impecunious friend. They hid their secret. . . . At the end of a month, one morning the girl was missing from her home. She had made a runaway marriage with Cadvan's acquaintance. From that hour Lord Cadvan vowed an oath he would have his revenge upon that man, just as Llewelyn waited to avenge the wrong Joan and her lover had done him. Like a hawk he waited for a little bird to come into his hand, so that he could

cage that bird, because it belonged to the man who had broken his heart. He waited for years, to-day the bird flew into the trap, and his hour of revenge is at hand ! ”

“ Oh, I don’t understand you,” Nest cried.

There was a long silence and the man’s remark seemed to come from far away.

“ I am Lord Cadvan. Your father stole your mother from me. And now her child becomes the scapegoat for the wrong that has been done unto me.”

“ You cannot hurt me, I will return to Davy.”

“ Already he is far away on the road to Nant y Glo,” was the quiet answer, “ with my message to your father. All that you see belongs to me. The gates on my estate can be automatically closed and I have closed them. You are my prisoner ! ”

CHAPTER X

LITTLE WILD FLOWER

HAVE you ever felt that you are living in a dream when you are wide awake? Have you experienced that still more uncanny sensation which conveys the impression that you are studying yourself with the cold critical aloofness of a stranger, as if there are two entities encased within the body! One who criticises or feels contempt for the inferior self—the self which is bruised by the ups and downs of human experience, whilst the other self argues:

“Why allow greed, ambition, lust and love to disturb you, when at any hour the curtain may be rung down?”

In a vague way, at the moment when Nest was faced by the mocking sinister features of Lord Cadvan, she was a victim of this reasoning. It was fostered by the unreality of the situation. Of course it was a dream, soon she would awaken to find herself in Maelgwyn's car, on the way back to Nant y Glo, and then a picture of Lewis Jestyn singing: “Wass you effer see, such a jolly time before!” passed before her mind's eye.

Lord Cadvan was watching her, feverishly enjoying a piquant situation, thrilled for the first time since he had received a certain note from Myfanwy, now yellow with age. He had fingered it a thousand times, hoping, longing, living for the day when he would pay back the man who had robbed him of the fruits of love. If

Ifor Anwyl had belonged to a more commonplace type, possibly Cadvan would not have had to wait such a long time for his revenge. Ifor asked nothing from any man but the right to be left alone. Wealth did not entice him, power or ambition. But if one waits long enough it is always possible to find a weak spot in the armour of an adversary. He may be so accustomed to the thing he prizes, that he is not conscious of its value until it is taken from him. And Ifor's ewe lamb had been delivered unto Cadvan.

"By the way, what is your name?" Cadvan asked Nest.

"Gwenta Nest, but I'm called Nest."

"Pretty name," he remarked laconically, "follow me!"

He pushed his way through the trees to the thicket where Nest had been told the shooting was taking place. A heap of birds lay on the sward. The beautiful plumage, blue and gold, and red, made a bright spot of colour upon the grass, and Nest with her passionate love for life and the birds of the air and the beasts of the field, could not resist her wild cry:

"Oh, you call this sport? It is cruel, it is wicked!"

She fell on her knees and stroked the soft plumage. A beautiful picture, that Lord Cadvan with a malicious smile on his lips fully appreciated.

"We shall be having fine birds of similar quality for dinner to-night," he remarked brutally. The next moment a Daimler glided up to them. Two or three men got out and a woman, youngish, rather plump and pretty. Her fair hair was covered with a fawn coloured felt hat, that matched her knitted suit.

"We thought you were lost, Lord Cadvan," she exclaimed, and then she stopped, and smilingly surveyed his companion. Having done so she shrugged

her shoulders and permitted an amused glance to pass between herself and the men. In an undertone she remarked to her host : " Now we know the truth, you wicked old thing. You were captivated by the charms of a rustic maid."

" The daughter of the one woman I have wished to marry, Morvyth," Lord Cadvan answered, in his easy sneering manner.

Nest shivered at the sound of his well-bred icy voice, the cruelty of it unnerved her. Apparently it had had much the same effect upon the other woman. Nest stared at her surreptitiously. Was she the woman whom Maelgwyn had wished to marry ? Lord Cadvan might have known what was passing in her mind for he said :

" Nest, this is Lady Morvyth Hervey. It is possible," he added with another of his malicious smiles, " that she will become Lady Morvyth Cadvan. Nest," he puckered up his eyebrows, as if the sound of the name pleased him, " I'm not going to call you by your surname, Nest, Nest fach, that is what I like," and placing a hand gently on her shoulder, he said to Lady Morvyth, " Do you realise she might have been my own child, and then Maelgwyn. . . . Let us see what is that common, but particularly illuminating phrase that is used when another little stranger appears in the domestic abode of the happily wedded—ah ! I have it ; then, dear Morvyth, Maelgwyn's elegant nose would have been put as completely out of joint, as if it had been caught in a rat trap."

" How amusing you are ! "

" You don't mean that, dear lady. You want to use another word, less pleasing, but more truthful, the word disgusting. But discretion is oft times the better part of valour. Now I want you to fix Nest up with some-

thing to wear for dinner. Her mother was the best dressed woman in the County. If your wardrobe will permit let us see if you can do her mother's daughter justice."

"I will wear nothing but my own clothes," cried Nest.

"That is impolite," Lord Cadvan rebuked her.

With tears in her eyes, she answered in a low defiant voice.

"I do not wish to make a scene before these people. You know that I want to go home, and I will not be dressed up by another woman!"

Some of Cadvan's friends were strolling towards them. Turning to Lady Morvyth, Lord Cadvan said:

"Please go on with the rest of the party," He introduced his guests to Nest, a neighbouring squire, a sporting parson, and Nell Pryse, a bachelor woman of mature years with a shingled head and a monocle. who looked more like a man than a woman in her grey tweed, with a gun tucked under her arm. Nest, unhappy and distressed, hardly heard their names, she bowed without looking up when the introduction took place. When they had gone Lord Cadvan said approvingly:

"I appreciate your tact in not wishing to make a scene before the crowd. You've got your mother's breeding, in spite of your father's peasant blood, a heritage which makes a man as obstinate as a mule. Get into the car."

A chauffeur opened the door.

When it closed upon them, Nest turned to her companion.

"Why do you tell lies to me?"

"Lies?" Lord Cadvan raised his eyebrows in quizzical surprise.

"It is not true that that woman will become Lady Cadvan. Maelgwyn hates her, he told me."

"Maelgwyn!" The smile deepened on the old man's features. Nest thought that his long fingers lying limply on the fur rug which covered his thin knees, looked like the talons of a bird. "Since when has my heir been Maelgwyn to you?"

"Oh, I don't know, I don't know," cried Nest. "You make me say things best left unsaid!"

"So the handsome and romantic Maelgwyn is whiling away the dismal hour that keeps him on a bed of planks, by making love to the beautiful daughter of his host. We are all devilishly fond of women!"

"He loves me, loves me terribly, just as much as I love him, so it's no good saying bad things about him, for I will not believe you."

"You little Welsh spitfire," grinned Cadvan. It was years since he had had such fun. Here was something entirely unsophisticated, he had not met the like of Nest with her passionate abandon and disregard of consequences for an age. The women whom he had met since Myfanwy had jilted him were artificial, scheming, with snake-like tongues dipped in honey, so sweet, and yet so stinging. But Nest!

He turned upon her and said:

"I should like to chain you up in a cage, and slip a piece of sugar through the bars, and watch you. Just as you were going to bite the sugar, hey presto, it is whipped away from you and given to the cat. The cat, that's it, the soft, pussy cat. You don't see the point of my jest, do you, little one, but you will one day."

"You cannot frighten me about Maelgwyn. He is true to me. Nothing would make him give me up, not even you."

"No, I admit that, but something else might!"

"I won't listen to you. What can you know of Maelgwyn, he is almost a stranger to you. For five weeks I have hardly left him night or day, Betti, Davy and Hew have helped me. It was a great trial for him to lie on those planks and wait until his leg was healed. I took my harp and sang to him 'David of the White Rock,' and 'Mentra Gwen,' and I played to him on the harp as if he were a baba bach and I his little mam."

"Do you mean to say you play the harp?"

"Yes, my mother's harp."

There was a silence, and she hardly recognised his voice when he said:

"Myfanwy's harp! I often wondered what happened to it. I will send to Nant y Glo for it, and you shall play all those airs to me. All the tunes which Myfanwy played . . ."

"My father will not let me take the harp from Nant y Glo, he prizes it next to his chisel. When I go to Eisteddfodau I borrow a harp."

"But Myfanwy's harp shall come here. You will sing to me and the years will fade away. I shall become young, and just as Salome charmed Herod with her dancing, so the strings of Myfanwy's harp shall cause me to cry out to you: 'Ask and I will give unto you even unto the half of my kingdom.'"

"If I played upon the harp, rather indeed would I play as David played before Saul to soothe his restless spirit."

"And if I said, 'find a way of bringing that harp to the Castell, play to me, and if it is true that Maelgwyn wishes to marry you, I will give my consent?'"

"Well, indeed, I think I would go down on my hands and knees to my father."

They were sweeping along the drive to the Castell, and Nest turned impulsively to Lord Cadvan :

" In this big car I could soon reach Nant y Glo, then I could ask my father about the harp, and I would see if Maelgwyn is all right. Nobody understands him as I do ! "

" My precious nephew is like a cat with nine lives," was Cadvan's quick retort, " and as for myself, it is a great pleasure to have Myfanwy's child under my care."

When the car drew up to the great nail-studded door, Cadvan bade Nest follow him. The entrance hall was lofty, and its Gothic domes, niches and recesses gave it the appearance of a chapel. In front of the hall there was a colonnade, over which a passage communicated with the different apartments, and the whole was lit by a flat lanthorn dome. Armour graced the recesses, and upon the walls at regular intervals, a collection of swords and firearms were used as decoration. Beneath Nest's feet, covering the stone floor, were priceless rugs from Persia.

" It is very lovely," she said in a low voice, " too lovely for me." A regretful expression crept over her mobile features. What a pity that Maelgwyn was heir to all this pomp and circumstance. Sad it was that he was not a farmer, or an artist !

Cadvan's eagle eye noted her mood. Here was pleasure, indeed, to watch the effect of his power upon this child of nature ! To crush her with its weight, to crush her just as her mother had crushed his heart, and to this end already he had given orders that the state bedroom should be prepared for his guest, the state room where the lords of Castell Cadvan had for generations spent their bridal night. The hall was deserted. Cadvan summoned Mai Thomas, the house-

keeper, whose hair had grown white in the service of her master. She was clad in black silk, and she wore plain lawn collars and cuffs. She was too well-trained to exhibit signs of surprise at his Lordship's order. Logs of wood were set alight in the vast bedroom grate, lavender-scented linen covered the heavy four poster bed with its rich carvings and armorial bearings of the Cadvan family. The walls were panelled in faded blue silk, curtains of the same fabric covered the lozenged and mullioned windows. Over the fireplace was the portrait of a former Cadvan by Gainsborough, with powdered wig, satin breeches, and dainty ruffles at his throat and partly covering his exquisite hands. His expression reminded Nest of Maelgwyn.

"Your luggage has not arrived, Miss."

"I have no luggage. It is not my fault that I am here. If my clothes disgrace such a fine place I cannot help it."

"But to-night?"

"I shall sleep on the top of the bed, just as I am."

"It is not for me to make suggestions to his Lordship's guests. Forgive me, you are very young. Once I had a daughter like you, and in my room there are clothes that would fit you. A white muslin frock that you could wear for dinner, that is if you are not too proud." There was something about the house-keeper's anxiety to help her that appealed to Nest, and she took her hand and said:

"All my life I have wished that my mam fach had not been taken to meet the Heavenly King. Every day I long for her more, perhaps it is the same longing that you have for your daughter?"

"Well, yes indeed, it is the same. When a man says, 'Time will heal all things,' he does not know real

sorrow. Time does not heal the longing for one who has been taken away. Each day the sorrow grows heavier, although circumstances make us hide the wound."

"That is true I am sure," Nest agreed. For a moment she was tempted to confide to this sympathetic woman all that had happened to her. They heard the tap tap of high heels upon the stone corridor, and the next moment Lady Morvyth, clad in a glittering silver peignoir lined with cherry coloured silk, stood on the threshold, and Mrs. Thomas withdrew.

"I heard that the bridal suite had been placed at your disposal," she remarked. "It will be something of a surprise to Captain Cadvan when he returns to the Castell to find his uncle in the last stages of senile dotage. We have three quarters of an hour until dinner time. It's no use my offering you any togs, they'd be umpteen miles too big for you."

"Mrs. Thomas has come to the rescue," Nest told her; and then she went on desperately: "Oh, can you not persuade Lord Cadvan to let me go away from here?"

Lady Morvyth opened a gold cigarette case, she withdrew a perfumed cigarette and lit it. After a short space, she said with her drawl:

"Do you really want to free yourself from Lord Cadvan's whims? He has reached a stage in his miserable existence when the only thing that really appeals to him is the power to crush somebody. If he knows you want to get away, his cunning brain will be scheming for hours on end, creating new devices for thwarting your desires. He has practically made escape impossible, you are cut off from the rest of the Castell, see!" and Lady Morvyth crossed the room and opened a door, and Nest found herself in a beautiful

octagon sitting-room. There was no outlet from it, only the doorway through which they passed.

"But the door which faces this room?" Nest questioned.

Lady Morvyth placed her first finger upon her lip to warn Nest not to speak, then she quietly went into the corridor and opened another door. Nest found herself in the private chapel of the Castell. It had several large pointed windows with stained glass and a finely groined and fretted roof. The altar, upon which lilies had been placed in gold vases, was covered with a finely embroidered silk cloth. On each side of the entrance were two carved stalls for the Chaplain, and above was a handsome organ loft.

"You see Lord Cadvan knew what he was doing when he placed you here!"

"It is terrible," cried Nest, "but beautiful!"

"Too beautiful for me," smiled Lady Morvyth. "If it were a ballroom I could get up some enthusiasm, as it is I call it pure waste. It is only used for christenings and for services of the dead over a departed Cadvan. The natives say it is haunted, possibly it is. Every yard of land in this district has its history. Just outside the park there is a cromlech—an ancient British monument, erected over two thousand years ago, in reality," Lady Morvyth went on, "it is an altar of death."

"What do you mean?"

"I am simply repeating what Lord Cadvan told me yesterday. It was used before druidical worship became extinct, pretty melancholy! The priest stood on the stone, and numbers of lives both human and of the brute creation, were sacrificed there."

"I feel death all about this place," Nest confessed with a shudder.

" Help me, and I'll help you. I want to get a letter delivered to Captain Cadvan. He does not know I am here. We loved each other years ago, but the old trouble, lack of means, prevented our marriage. Happily that impediment has gone now."

" And your husband ? " questioned Nest.

" Killed in the hunting field nine months ago. I'm a very rich woman now. Dicky wasn't a bad sort, but an incorrigible bore. My visit here is almost as great an accident as yours. I was staying at The Crillon in Paris with my cousin, Miss Pryse, whom you met this afternoon, when Lord Cadvan bore down upon us and insisted on our joining his house-party. The inducement he offered to me was that Maelgwyn had just arrived home on three months' leave from India. Imagine my disgust at finding on my arrival that he had fallen down a ridiculous precipice and smashed his leg. Of course I wanted to borrow a car and dash off to see him, immediately Cadvan developed his passion for thwarting me. So let us both make a concerted attack by subterfuge on the quiet. We will get hold of a Daimler, I'll drop you near your home, and then I'll go on to Nant y Glo and pay Maelgwyn a surprise visit."

Fear of this woman made Nest reticent and she reasoned to herself thus :

" I will not tell her now that I come from Nant y Glo."

Seeing her hesitation, Lady Morvyth said :

" At any rate, you would lose nothing by the scheme. You would get home, and I should see the man I mean to marry."

" But I thought it was long ago that he loved you ? " Nest faltered.

" What has that got to do with it ? I know men,

their weak spots. I'm the sort of woman no man can resist." Morvyth was walking restlessly up and down the room. "If I could get Maelgwyn alone for half an hour, I'd make him mad for me just like he used to be," she said passionately. "Will you help me?"

"No, I cannot," Nest cried out, and afraid that she had given herself away, she sank on to a chair sobbing bitterly.

"You funny little creature, why all this fuss?"

"You will know soon enough."

"Don't tell me the gay and dashing boy has succumbed to the charms of a country wench. If so, all the more reason that I should rescue him!" and with that final taunt she made her way down the stone staircase.

CHAPTER XI

CADVAN'S MYSTIC SPELL

NEST peered into the mirror on the dressing-table. Her silky hair framed her bewitching little face. She turned away with an impatient sigh. Lady Morvyth should never take Maelgwyn away from her. Had he not told her that she was dearer to him than any other woman in the world !

Mrs. Thomas knocked on the door and entered :

" When you are ready miss, I have instructions to take you to his lordship."

They made their way into the hall and along the colonnade. Lord Cadvan now immaculately clad in evening clothes was seated before a writing table in the library. Books lined the walls from the parquet floor to the carved oak ceiling.

" Hello, Morvyth Hervey fixed you up more decently than I thought she would do."

" It was Mrs. Thomas who lent this dress to me. Now that you have shown me how powerful you are, will you not let me go home ? "

" All these years my life has been full of bitterness. The only people who come near to me are sycophants, caring naught for me, only for what they can get out of me. Do you seriously think that Lady Morvyth cares for me ? Her covetous nature gloats upon the wealth that is expressed by Castell Cadvan. I put up with it because I can usually get my pound of flesh in the end."

"You must be very unhappy."

"Unhappy?" Lord Cadvan permitted his lips to smile. "There may be many causes for unhappiness, personally I find satisfaction in meting out to others what they would mete out to me if they had half a chance. Perhaps the reason why I have remained faithful to your mother's memory, is the knowledge that no material thing could hold her—or win her. Do you think I don't know what killed her? It was poverty. Even love couldn't make up for lost luxuries. But you know this?"

"My father never speaks of her."

"Her death brought him fame," sneered Cadvan. "I am told that he could make all the money he wished if he would do more masterpieces like the Anwyl tomb."

"But he won't," Nest declared passionately. "There is another example for you of a man who will not be bought by money!"

"No, because he is a peasant by birth and a peasant by nature. The pigsty satisfies him."

"You have no right to speak like that of my father."

Cadvan rubbed his thin hands and laughed, and he went to a far corner of the library, unlocked a safe and brought out a jewel box. Without a word he took a string of pearls and fastened them around Nest's neck until the soft sheen of the pearls rested upon her rounded bosom.

"Those pearls were worn by your mother until the hour before she ran away from me. They were my betrothal gift to her."

Reverently Nest handled the necklace. To her it was just a string of beautiful beads that her mother had worn. That they were perfectly matched pearls worth several thousands she did not know. She was in a curious position. On one hand she was tremend-

ously incensed against this old man. But when he talked of his lost love she pitied him . . . besides she had always longed to hear more about her mother. . . . Her father was reticent, but Cadvan quickly discovered his strength and he spoke tenderly of the dead woman.

"Oh," cried Nest, "how splendid it is to hear you talk."

"What do you mean?"

"Nobody has ever spoken to me about my mother before."

Cadvan closed the jewel box and replaced it in the safe. It was a long time before he said:

"Does your father never tell you what a deuced fine woman she was?"

"No, indeed. I have no idea what she was like."

With a courtly bow he took her hand and said: "Step on to that chair and look up."

Nest did as he bade her and she saw her own reflection, the white dress, the string of pearls . . . how exquisite they were.

"Why are you doing this?" Nest asked.

"When you see yourself, you see your mother." He helped her down. "I will prove it." On the fob chain which he wore there was a bunch of seals and a small plain locket, he handed it to her and she opened it. She gave a little cry of astonishment. The priceless work of art portrayed a girl with smiling features, it might have been a painting of herself.

"You must have loved her very much to have worn that locket all these years."

"Loved her or hated her, my dear," said Cadvan returning to his old cynicism. "A man usually loves that which he desires, and hates that which he possesses. And now, I suppose we must join my

guests. A man is arriving to-night whom I have not seen for some years. He is coming to settle down in Anglesea. He is a rich man, wants something to do, to be made Deputy Lord Lieutenant or something of that sort ! ”

Nest unfastened the pearls, but Cadvan put his hand on hers. “ Wear them, girl fach, until you return to Nant y Glo. They are your prison chains.”

Pearls her mother had worn—once again Nest fingered them reverently. She followed Lord Cadvan along the colonnade until they reached the drawing-room.

The walls were covered in painted silk, the angles of burnished gold. Several pieces of rare lacquer, Persian rugs on the floor, and immense chairs and sofas covered in dull gold silk completed the furnishing of a wonderful room. From the ceiling hung a crystal chandelier, in which cunningly arranged candles had been placed, giving a realistic impression of wax and not imitation ones lit by electricity.

Lady Morvyth was sitting by the fire clad in a sheath dress of silver. At her side was her cousin in scarlet velvet, her bobbed hair showed off her slender neck. Several men were conversing near the window, the local Vicar, the Revd. Rhys Powell, and a neighbouring squire and landowner. A tall soldierly looking man looked towards the door when Cadvan and Nest entered.

“ Hello, Morgan, you haven’t changed, except your hair.”

The man faced his host and Nest. His features were bronzed, his eyes deep, penetrating blue. A slight greyish moustache covered his upper lip. His carriage was erect, he created an impression of strength and resourcefulness. If you had been asked to describe

his vocation in life, no matter how great a student of men you might be, you would have been pardoned had you hesitated before giving your answer. As the man walked towards you, his slight rolling gait might have suggested that he had been at sea, his soldierly bearing would indicate the army, his alert and debonair manner that he had been accustomed to power and authority. His keen glance swept over Nest. He noted her youth, her slimness, and the priceless pearls that mocked her white dress.

"Arrogant," he thought, "like an Eastern potentate who wears white linen as a background to the jewels which are worth the ransom of a king."

"Come to England to settle down and find a wife, Morgan?" Cadvan asked in his stinging way, "life and love?"

"At my age, one is content with a wife," was the cynical answer. "Love isn't always a satisfactory adventure!"

He must be very old, thought Nest, forty-five or more. The next moment she found herself introduced to Sir Rhys Morgan. The party mixed up, there was a hubbub of quiet conversation. Nest watched the scene again with that odd sensation that she was dreaming. At dinner she found herself in the place of honour, she did not know it, until she saw a look that expressed contempt on Lady Morvyth's beautifully arranged features. On her right sat Cadvan and on her left was the man from India. The table was of black oak, a fine setting for the gleaming silver and elegant cut glass. She glanced around the spacious dining hall. It was very extensive and lofty, there were five lancet-shaped windows on one side, and an elegantly groined roof. Several Van Dykes and a huge Gainsborough graced the walls. The splendour of her surroundings awed Nest,

and Cadvan watched her surreptitiously. He saw the eager way in which Morgan tried to engage her into conversation, her nervousness accentuated her Welsh accent.

"You live in Anglesea?" he asked.

"No, indeed, I live right away in the mountains."

"Anywhere near Nant y Glo?"

Cadvan heard the cross questioning. The sarcastic smile deepened around his lips. Life was going to present new problems for him to solve. He had commenced to believe that he had finished with thrills, that the time had come for him to wither away like a leaf upon the trees on his vast lands. But there were still things to interest him after all. He said in his mocking way:

"Nest lives at the foot of Snowdon. She is a great lady in her own part of the country."

"That is not true," she cried. "Why do you try to make me look small? I live in a little house, a little farm house."

To cover the awkward situation, Morgan said:

"I am going to stay with a man in that part of the world, an artist friend of mine, named Lewis Jestyn. Do you know him?"

"He is a wonderful man. His paintings are splendid. The other day he painted me." Nest blushed and Morgan thought her enchanting.

"By Jove, I must ask him to let me see the picture!"

Cadvan smiled sardonically.

"Are you going to blossom forth as an art critic, as well as a lady killer, Morgan?"

CHAPTER XII

A STAB IN THE DARK

DINNER was over at last, and Nest realized that she was expected to leave the table with the women of the party. They made their way along the colonnade to the drawing-room. A table had been set out for cards, the grand piano opened. The butler came in with coffee.

"Yes, black, I like very black coffee," Lady Morvyth said in a high pitched voice, her hand shook slightly when she helped herself to sugar.

Nell Pryse was interested. She saw that her cousin was perturbed, vaguely she wondered how this strange house-party of which she made one, could possibly prove successful. There seemed so many under currents. When Lord Cadvan had spotted them in Paris, and he had thrust his pressing invitation upon Lady Morvyth she had remonstrated:

"My dear, he is half mad. Everybody knows that Cadvan is eccentric," and Morvyth had turned upon her savagely and answered:

"Do you think you can tell me anything I don't know about that family?"

Events were not shaping themselves as Lady Morvyth wished. She sipped her coffee out of the dainty grey and gold Rockingham cup. She lit her cigarette, and then crossed over to Nest who was standing before the fire.

"As woman to woman I don't think much of your gown, but your pearls are priceless—if they are real."

"Indeed, I do not know much about them. Lord Cadvan lent them to me until I leave the Castell. My prison chain he called them. They were——" she was going to explain about her mother, but somehow or other it seemed like sacrilege to do so, she checked herself just in time.

"Innocent child," Lady Morvyth smiled.

Nest coloured, and without another word the woman crossed over to the piano and commenced to play. Music was her strong point, the one good asset that came to her with her Welsh blood, her fingers rippled over the keys, and she began to sing in a fine contralto voice :

"Do you remember the paths we trod
The rippling lazy stream,
Ivy deck'd trees and yellow flowers
Like gold in the sunlight's gleam.
The sky above of azure blue,
The birds all singing sweet
Whilst I sat midst the grass and flowers
And you lay at my feet . . ."

There was longing, passion, desire in the beautiful voice, all Morvyth Hervey's artificiality fell from her, like the husk falling away from soft green corn. The passion of it hurt Nest, because she feared it. This woman would be as relentless in her love, as she had been relentless in her ambitions. The notes died away, Lady Morvyth saw that she had made an impression on Nest. She was glad, always glad of a chance of testing her power upon a human being, man or woman.

"One has to be in love to write that drivel," she sighed. "I was, terribly, at the time. I used to try and get to sleep at night making up that poem. I spent hours in the day-time composing the music . . ."

"You are very clever, indeed," said Nest. And she wondered if Maelgwyn had remembered Lady Morvyth's wonderful voice, when she sang *Mentra Gwen* to him!

* * * * *

It was getting dark when Davy reached Bangor from Cadvan. He cut along the chill plain near Trifaen until he reached the road through Cwm y Glo and Llanberis. At last he came to the rustic bridge that took him to Nant y Glo.

Betti was locking up the henhouse, as he came along.

"Well, indeed man, long time you've been away," she cried. "I've done the baking and gathered in sticks for the morning, and seen to the butter. And where's Miss Nest now?"

"Dear me, a fine story I've got to tell the master for sure," Davy answered. "She is not here."

"Gracious goodness," cried Betti, dropping the pail that was in her left hand, with a crash upon the floor, "you don't say some harm has come to her?"

"Well, no indeed, she is all right in body and limb as far as I know, but there was nothing else for me to do but to come on here. I will go back if necessary."

"You lost your way, *mochyn dû bach* (little black pig) is that what you are trying to say?" cried Betti. "What will you say to the Captain, he is downstairs on his crutches. Howell got him up. He is stubborn like all you men, and will not go to bed until he has seen the mistress fach."

"Oh, you make me tired with your chatter," cried the exasperated Davy. He strode down the garden path to the shed.

"Hello, is that you?" Anwyl asked. An oil lamp hung from the wooden rafters. The shepherd and the

lost sheep were taking form. It was a realistic piece of work, looming up in the dusk of the shed.

"Nest is home?" Anwyl was wiping his hands on a cloth, and gazing at the same time with critical eyes upon the work which he considered one of his finest pieces of sculpture.

"She has not come back."

Anwyl looked sharply at his servant. He saw that he was trying to break something to him, and that he knew he might be wrongly judged for the thing which he had done.

"What do you mean, she has not come back?"

"Look you," Davy faltered. "We went along champion and we got to Castell Cadvan, and Miss Nest was upset because Lord Cadvan was out. We started back along the road, and something went wrong with the car. Miss Nest got out and went off to find help. Well, indeed, there's a long time I waited, and then came a man along the road and he said that Lord Cadvan had sent him to inspect the car. He found a little rust had got on to the magneto. He soon put it right. He had just finished when an old man joined us and asked if I for Anwyl was my master. 'Yes, indeed,' I told him, 'and no better master has man for certain,' and he said, 'Go back to Nant y Glo, and hand this letter to your master.' 'No, indeed to goodness,' says I, 'I will not go back without the mistress fach.' 'Tell your master that his daughter is safe with me, Lord Cadvan,' and with that remark he put the letter into my hand, and look you, here it is!"

Anwyl's face was like a mask when he tore open the envelope. Along the path came the tap tap of crutches. At the door the tapping ceased.

"You must excuse me for intruding upon you like this, but I am anxious about Nest."

Anwyl looked up from the letter which he had been reading and stared wildly into the features of Cadvan's heir.

"Read this," he cried hoarsely, Maelgwyn took the letter from his host.

"For nearly twenty years I have waited to pay you back for the evil you did to me when you took Myfanwy from me," Maelgwyn read. "I now take her child from you. I will surround her with the luxury from which you deprived her mother. All these years I have remained silent, but now you shall know the truth."

Whilst Maelgwyn was reading, mechanically Anwyl opened a little yellow envelope. Within there was a sheet of paper which bore the handwriting of his wife. The words faced him pitilessly, robbing him of dreams, robbing him of peace, of love and the halo with which his wife's dark hair had been crowned.

"I do not think I shall survive the birth of my child, Cadvan, I made a mistake. This is the tragedy of love! When a woman makes the marriage I made, she suffers. I have tried to hide the bitterness from Ifor. The horror of life in this desolate region, cut adrift from the care and sympathy of my own people. Ifor's mother expected me to work as she had worked all her life. I could not wear clogs and toil in the fields, and Ifor's father was content to eat his salt bacon, sleep and live the ordinary life of a peasant. They died and Ifor mourned for his people. His veneer is almost perfect, but there came times when he jarred upon me. His work occupied his days. If I die, and the chance comes to you to help my child, in mercy's sake do so in memory of the love you once bore to Myfanwy . . ."

CHAPTER XIII

AN ARROW IN THE AIR

FROM boyhood Maelgwyn had been conscious of a streak of cruelty beneath his uncle's suave manner. But Cadvan's betrayal of a dead woman's confession was more like the work of a devil than a man. Anwyl's passion for his wife was a legend in the valley. The story was told that when Myfanwy was dying he set forth to the mountains and prayed that a miracle would happen. Had he not stopped at the Vicarage, on his return and declared to the rector, the Rev. William Roberts, that even as Jairus's daughter had been raised from the dead, so would Myfanwy be raised to life by faith and prayer. For three days after life had left her body, he had still refused to believe the inevitable. "After three days did Christ not rise again?" he argued passionately, so after three days would Myfanwy rise. . . . The blow fell . . . the bitter truth . . . the day of miracles was past.

And now Ifor Anwyl was confronted with a greater cruelty than death, the grimmest tragedy of life—disillusionment.

Helplessly leaning upon his crutches, Maelgwyn looked down upon the wreck of a man, who sprawled like a stricken animal upon a rough plank seat.

Maelgwyn laid his hands upon him, trying to mouth some foolish words, for are not all words of comfort foolish? What could he say to this man whose love

for a woman had been like a lamp shining in the darkness. Suddenly the light failed. He was alone, struggling in the desert of despair.

Anwyl shrank away from his guest as if his touch gave him physical pain. Maelgwyn could do nothing for him. He left the shed with bowed head. On his way to the house he met Betti.

"Everybody seems to have gone mad about this place," she cried. "You tapping about on your crutches and looking like an old corpse. Didn't Dr. Howell say you were not to be too venturesome for a day or two, and the mistress fach has not come home, and the master——"

"I may be wrong, but I think it would be best to leave Mr. Anwyl alone for awhile."

Betti peered suspiciously into his features.

"Have you no heart? Miss Nest told me herself that you loved her, and here is Davy, back home, without her, but what do you care?"

"A great deal," Maelgwyn replied wearily. "Your mistress is safe with my uncle at Castell Cadvan."

This information did not appear to satisfy Betti, she furiously retorted:

"And the master, oh! he'll come in when it suits him. His heart is like his carvings, made of stone. I have no patience with the selfish ways of men. Hew will help you to bed."

Maelgwyn followed her into the house. He was in a quandary, his mind intensely disturbed. Knowing his uncle's conservative views with regard to class distinction, he had felt very much like a gambler when he throws the dice. But instead of a little white square with black indented spots, the dice had been alive, a woman, Nest! He had weighed up every possible argument: "If I go back to Cadvan and say,

‘I have fallen in love with Ifor Anwyl’s daughter’ there will be cynical abuse, but if he sees her?’ Maelgwyn banked upon Nest’s charm of manner, upon her beauty, and her gift for repartee. “Her freshness will intrigue an old man,” thus he reviewed his schemes. Assisted by Hew, he made his way up the staircase. Would his plans end in failure or success?

When Maelgwyn left him, Anwyl sat mutely staring into space, torn by every agonised emotion known to man. Every hour of his life with Myfanwy passed before him. The day of their meeting, the first kiss, his passionate declaration of love, that had rushed forth like a restless tide which could not be stemmed. He thought of her soft body and her clinging arms when she had whispered that his passion was reciprocated. And after their marriage? He had devoted hours to his art, because from the first day that it was known that Myfanwy was to become a mother, the necessity became still more pressing that he should make his way in the world. Anwyl’s mother had been a hard woman, she had worked early and late upon the farm, until her brown hair became white, and her gums toothless, her figure thin and angular. She had never gathered Myfanwy to her bosom and mothered her, because the girl’s pink and white beauty was an offence to her ill-nurtured womanhood. And Anwyl’s father? He did not want a sculptor for a son, but a strong man to farm his land. He did not want “one of the county” for a daughter-in-law, but a lusty wench who would bear sons and help his old wife to milk the cows and clear the dung from the sheds, and lay it upon the earth for manure. Anwyl believed in Myfanwy’s devotion, he had cherished it, worshipped it, and she had deceived him! She had never been bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, she had despised them

all . . . himself and the parents who begat him. Myfanwy had been a human lie, living beneath the roof of his fathers, and regretting the other man. . . . Once he laughed aloud, wild, tuneless laughter which echoed through the rafters. His first laughter since Myfanwy's death. What was Myfanwy to him now? Not even a memory, only a ghost of hideous cunning. He staggered across the shed, and found a candle. Placing it in a lantern he pushed his chisel and mallet into his pocket ; thus equipped he set forth upon the road.

It was a wild night, the mountains grim and relentless, formed a dark line against the sky. A watery moon, at times obscured by a bank of sombre cloud, illuminated the gloomy, forbidding countryside. Anwyl opened the wooden gate that led to the churchyard, and he stood before Myfanwy's tomb. Her peaceful features mocked him. Her beautiful hands, had they not penned the letter which had set his brain on fire? A shrine of love! With a hoarse cry he lifted the mallet and brought it down with a heavy blow upon the delicate statuary, and then reason left him. He talked incoherently to himself, as he chipped away with his chisel, upon the sculptured marble . . .

CHAPTER XIV

DEAD ASHES

AT Castell Cadvan that evening Nell Pryse and some of the men made for the billiard room, Lord Cadvan settled down to bridge, and with the excuse that she had some letters to write Lady Morvyth went off to a far-away corner of the room, and so Nest found herself alone with Sir Rhys Morgan.

Lady Morvyth sat down at a red lacquer writing-table, mechanically taking up a gaily coloured quill pen, she smoothed out the sheets of crested paper with her long jewelled fingers. She did not commence to write immediately, her mind was full of conflicting thoughts. She stared out of the mullioned window towards the coast, across the Menai Straits, where the lights twinkled merrily. The low murmur of two voices reached her, Morgan's voice cultured and refined, and Nest's soft musical Welsh accent. Morgan was telling Nest some of his stories, trying to interest her in the East and in himself in particular. He was a good raconteur, and Nest was an inspiration to any man. But Lady Morvyth did not find it an easy thing to commence her letter to Maelgwyn after his long silence. She started crudely: "Maelgwyn my dear, I have not had a single moment's happiness since we parted. Your uncle insisted on my visit to the Castell and I wanted to come. . . ."

After the first rubber, Lord Cadvan announced that he was tired of bridge.

"Must have music. Women should write their letters in the morning," he declared, with an angry glance in Lady Morvyth's direction. He went up to Nest, patted her on the shoulder, and pointing suspiciously at Morgan, he asked banteringly :

"What is he up to?"

"I've been letting off some of my yarns, and Miss Anwyl has been inflaming my desire to explore the mountains. Can't we arrange a picnic to-morrow, what about Snowdon? I daresay Lady Morvyth would join us. She used to be an ardent worshipper of nature. The life and soul of every picnic party for miles round."

"Please don't trouble to make up picnic parties on my account," Lady Morvyth exclaimed, "they seldom come up to one's expectations. One must be alone to find the ideal in nature."

"Or two alone," Cadvan chipped in with his brisk cynicism.

"That's an excellent suggestion," Morgan laughed. "Many thanks for the tip!"

"Not my own experience unfortunately," Cadvan retorted.

"At any rate," said Morgan turning to Nest, "I'm all for the two alone business. Will you take pity on me?" and finding her unresponsive, he went on persuasively, "if Snowdon is too far away, take me to Beaumaris Castle? It was the last fortress built by Edward, and like all castles more eastern than western!"

"Sir Rhys Morgan will bore you stiff if you don't look out," Lady Morvyth smiled. "He is a walking encyclopædia," and she added maliciously, "youth

is irresistible to middle age, there is something stimulating about guiding innocent feet into the way of knowledge."

Nest, pale and silent, was oppressed by the flippant character of the conversation. She was alarmed, too. Not for one instant had she believed that Lord Cadvan would keep her a prisoner for another day—to-morrow? Surely he would permit her to go home to-morrow! He was insisting on music again, for the moment plans for a picnic lay in abeyance. Nest watched Lady Morvyth make her way to the piano, the light fell upon her cloth of silver gown, it glittered and shone with every movement, and when her fingers swept over the keys, there was a restless air of expectancy. This time she did not sing one of her own compositions, and her fine voice rang out, clear as a bell:

"When like an arrow in the dark
Sorrow hath made our breast her mark,
Piercing the mail 'twixt link and link
One balm there is, one salve; just not to think."

There was a hush after she had finished, that hush that follows a fine performance, when even the chatter of the most fatuous parrot-like scandal-mongers is checked, until the artist herself breaks the spell as Lady Morvyth did, with the remark to Nest:

"Now it's your turn!"

"I cannot sing without my harp!"

"Another reason why it must come from Nant y Glo, Nest," Cadvan exclaimed rubbing his hands.

"Nant y Glo!" Lady Morvyth turned to the speaker, and Cadvan laughed.

"Does the name convey anything to you? Oh, yes of course, we'd been having such a frightfully pleasant time that we'd forgotten all about Maelgwyn.

You must be very shocked Nest. We've been discussing picnics, and listening to the voice of the siren, forgetting that my heir was almost as much a prisoner at Nant y Glo, as——"

Lady Morvyth knew that she had been outwitted.

Cadvan was delighted with the comedy. He compared the two women, Nest with her voluptuous charm, and Lady Morvyth, with her worldly cynicism and experience.

"Unequal chances," he reflected, "an amusing game. Morvyth is clever, knows the ropes, knows men," and to the girl he said :

"Nest, go to bed, to sleep now, no reading!" he shook his finger at her playfully.

"We haven't made any plans for to-morrow," Morgan grumbled. "What about visiting Lewis Jestyn, Miss Anwyl?"

Nest longed to say : "Oh, take me home. Take me from this place," but she met Cadvan's eyes. They compelled her to silence, they awed her. It was almost a relief when he spoke.

"Nest is going out with me, to-morrow."

She had hardly reached her room, when there was a knock on the door, and Lady Morvyth entered

"Why didn't you play a straight game with me?"

Nest fenced with a reply. She knew herself to be in the wrong, and she feared this vindictive woman, with her fair skin and artificial colouring. Was it not true, that sometimes the ashes of an old love sprang forth into flame again, and burnt with even greater intensity than before?

"When I made suggestions about getting away from here," Lady Morvyth went on breathlessly, "and I told you of the man I mean to marry, the man whom I have never ceased to love was at a place called Nant y

Glo, you had met him. I saw the guilty look on your face directly Lord Cadvan mentioned your harp. Don't you understand that I am dying to know how Captain Cadvan is? Only a few hours ago I was talking to you about him, trying to get a letter through to him, you remained silent. Why this mystery?"

"I do not want to discuss it."

"That means you are keeping something back from me. He is worse than Lord Cadvan supposes him to be, crippled for life, or something equally bad."

"No, he is much better. Even to-day he may be allowed to get about on his crutches."

"That would mean he could come home. Tell me about the accident."

Very briefly Nest related her climb up Trifaen and her meeting with Maelgwyn. Lady Morvyth listened intently, puzzling her brain as to the reason of Nest's former reticence and wondering what was Cadvan's real motive in treating Nest as if she were a lady of the house. Towards the end of Nest's narrative as to what had happened, Lady Morvyth's uneasiness became more acute. Men were so foolish when they were ill, so easily led. How frequently they had married their nurses after convalescence, what a wonderful matrimonial mart the wards of Red Cross Hospitals had been! Lady Morvyth flushed with anger. She had done V.A.D. work on the south coast during the Great War, the fight to nurse the wounded, was almost as painful as the retreat from Mons. Fashionable women, eighteen year old débutantes, old maids, stampeded up and down crowded stairways like war horses. And during the convalescent period, when taking temperatures, eyes met eyes, and lips. . . . Yes, it was a good matrimonial market she reflected

bitterly, and for days this girl had been alone, nursing Maelgwyn . . .

"You are not so simple as you look, are you, ' Nest fach,' as our distinguished host calls you ! "

" Indeed, I do not know what you mean ? "

" For weeks you kept Lord Cadvan's heir at Nant y Glo, and his people were not informed of the accident. "

Nest flushed with anger.

" You have no right to talk to me like this. "

" To-morrow, I shall go to Nant y Glo, and thrash things out for myself, " Lady Morvyth went on recklessly. " I commenced to write to Maelgwyn, but events show that as his oldest friend, it will be kinder for me to go and see him. "

To this remark Nest gave no answer, but she thought to herself, " No matter what happens, I too will find a way of going to Nant y Glo to-morrow. "

CHAPTER XV

DESECRATION

NEST was too tired to think when she found herself alone in the vast state room, with its carvings and tapestries. The leaping flames from the logs piled up in the wide open fireplace, cast awesome dancing shadows around her. Mai Thomas was a good servant to her master, and a considerate friend to "the little maid." Upon the oak dressing-table, elegant blond tortoiseshell hair brushes had been placed. They were monogrammed in gold, and bore the Cadvan coat of arms. A little calico nightgown, with cambric frills and featherstitching was the housekeeper's personal offering.

Before she went to sleep, Nest knelt beside the great four poster bed, and prayed that Y Brenin Mawr, the Big King, would guide her feet aright and take her to Maelgwyn and love on the morrow.

When she came down to breakfast the next morning she was still wearing her mother's pearls. She had worn them all through the night, her fingers clasping them, as if they possessed some magic to guard her from all the ills of the world. She did not hear Lord Cadvan enter the room, she started when she felt a hand upon her shoulder and heard his kind question :

"Well Nest, did you sleep well?"

He was clad in his corduroy sporting clothes, his scarlet kerchief was knotted beneath his chin. A slight twitching of the lips, disturbed his usual cynical ex-

pression. When Nest turned towards him, her lovely features were flushed and pleading, Cadvan turned his head away, she was so "deuced like Myfanwy." If only he could persuade her to stay with him! If only he could persuade her to leave Anwyl, but not to become Maelgwyn's wife. Let him stick to his old foolish love, he would give him an allowance, and Morvyth Hervey had money, but let Nest become his own property, the heiress of Cadvan. She should see the world, the great world beyond the hills. Trying to hide his thoughts, he asked conventional questions and pointed out various places of interest. Nest listened patiently, but all the time she was longing to cry out:

"Oh, don't waste time now that I am alone with you. When may I go home?" Aloud she said:

"Anglesea is a wonderful place and you have been charming to me in one way, but in another way cruel. I am anxious about my father."

"And Maelgwyn?"

"I have told you so."

"The others will make up a picnic party, or shoot my birds, or do whatever they like, Lady Morvyth——"

"She is going to see Maelgwyn."

"If she can get a car," Cadvan corrected. "She will not find one. You and I are going to the churchyard at Nant y Glo, and you shall show me the tomb that has been the talk of the principality."

"And afterwards?"

"Afterwards," Cadvan replied, "there will be many things to talk over with you. I am a very lonely man. It would brighten up the place a lot if you could come and stay here. By this time, your father knows that Myfanwy was anxious for me to do something for her child."

"Are you asking me to leave my father?"

"If you marry Maelgwyn, I presume you will not take your father about with you," Cadvan retorted with a return to his old cynicism.

"I shall marry Maelgwyn," Nest insisted, "why do you make me unhappy by using the word 'if'?"

"My heir must have my consent to any marriage that he may care to negotiate. Didn't I make that fact quite clear to you?"

"But you would not be so cruel as to keep Maelgwyn from me?" But before Cadvan could reply again the men came in. Sir Rhys Morgan joined Cadvan and Nest, he glanced into a mirror, adjusted his tie, and remarked that he had slept without a break until sunrise, explaining how rare this was: "Got into the habit of rising at four o'clock in India, and shall never get out of it, unless I make Anglesea my home, and then it seems that I shall sleep the sleep of a farm labourer."

Nest laughed.

"If you were under the orders of our maid Betti you wouldn't have the chance, even if you were a farm boy."

Nell Pryse arrived soon afterwards, spick and span, with her carefully adjusted monocle in position. She was clad in her favourite tweed.

"Looked in at Morvyth," she told her host. "Says he's tired, she's breakfasting in her room."

"You haven't changed your mind about Snowdon?" Morgan asked Nest pointedly, but Cadvan did not wait for her to reply. He interposed shortly:

"Your memory is short-lived, my friend. Did I not explain last night that Nest was fixed up for to-day?"

"Better luck next time," Morgan retorted, but his expression was none too pleasant when he lit his cigar.

Within an hour Nest found herself side by side with

Cadvan on their way to Nant y Glo churchyard. And following the same line of campaign as Morgan had embarked upon, Cadvan sought to win Nest's interest in himself by telling her stories of Anglesea. They swept along pleasant bye-ways, and later across the Menai Bridge. Cadvan had his own reasons for wishing to avoid the village of Nant y Glo. He had given orders to his chauffeur to take the longer route, which took them through Llanberis with its lakes, and the rocky eminence between the two sheets of water, upon which stands the ruins of Dolbadarn Castle. They rushed past the mighty cataract called Caunant Mawr which is in English, the waterfall of the great chasm.

"It's very wonderful," cried Nest, and Cadvan's lean face wrinkled up with pleasure at her enthusiasm.

"My father's cousin Marged Anwyl, lives near this spot, right up there in the mountains."

"Married?" Cadvan asked.

"No, she lives alone with her dogs, a dozen of them, greyhounds and terriers and spaniels. She can kill more foxes in a year than all your fine huntsmen. She plays the fiddle. She can fish and she can shoot and she can make harps, and shoe her own horses!"

"One day I will go and see her and order her to make a harp for you."

"Ach y fy, my Auntie Marged will take orders from no man. Only a week before I met Maelgwyn, she sent a letter asking me to go and see her, and one day I will go."

Cadvan remained silent for a moment. He did not wish Nest to pursue acquaintance with her father's people. Now that he had seen Myfanwy's child, he was prepared to do anything to keep her. She had come like a ray of sunshine into a dark room, her sunny disposition and charm seemed to pierce the gloom of his soul.

"If I were you, little girl," said he, "I should leave poor relations alone, and turn your attention to your mother's people and to your mother's friends."

"Well indeed," Nest answered, "I do not know my mother's people. The only relation that I have seen in the world is my Auntie Marged, and you are the first of my mother's friends whom I have met."

"And I will be a very great friend to her child, if she will trust me," said he earnestly.

Nest sighed. She could not resist his fascination, but in a way she distrusted him. She longed to get back to Maelgwyn, and to tell him of all that had happened. She knew that it had been his wish that she should make a good impression upon his uncle, that she had succeeded she knew, but not in a way that would please Maelgwyn.

They passed through the romantic pass between Llanberis and Capel Curig, the Cwm-Glas or the Blue Vale, with towering rocks on each side. Beyond Gorphwysfa, the resting place, to Bwlch y Gwyddyl. Sun, frost, and the rains and mists of ages have held their dominion upon these masses of rocks, and fragments of all kinds have covered the valley. They were surrounded by mountain ranges, and now the scene was barren and solitary, yet withal dignified. A stray cottage, but not a sight of shrub or tree or human being. Even the birds seemed shy of this desolation, and at last came the beautiful vale near Nant y Glo. Later they came to the churchyard, set in a nest of trees. The Vicarage was still occupied by the old rector William Roberts. Before alighting from the car, Nest said to Lord Cadvan :

"Take these pearls, for I am your prisoner no longer. I have kept my promise to you. Have I not brought you to the tomb which is the glory of the valley?"

For a moment Cadvan did not speak, but he looked wonderingly upon the small round face of the girl who had given her heart into the keeping of his heir, and then he glanced at the pearls, thrust back to him for a second time by a woman.

"Yes," he said thoughtfully, "I have always heard that Myfanwy's resting place is the wonder of the valley, the Valley of Desire!"

"I do not know what you mean, this is the Valley of Nant y Glo."

"Nevertheless," said Cadvan, "it is the Valley of Desire. Maelgwyn desires the love of Myfanwy's child, and your father desires to create a memorial of his love, and so he carves a marble figure. And there are those who desire that their ambitions shall be gratified, and I, who desire vengeance to fall upon one who has hurt me. In every human heart, there is always a valley of desire, a desire of love, of hate, of vengeance."

"Can you never forgive?" asked Nest.

"One cannot forgive the maker of an open wound that never heals."

"But if you do not forgive the sins of others, how can you expect forgiveness at the end?"

The reply was harsh and strained.

"I can never forgive your father."

Nest's eyes filled with tears.

"Hard it is for me."

She walked up the path followed by Cadvan, and when she came to the place where Myfanwy rested, she saw the rector and one or two men standing before the tomb talking excitedly. Jones, the farmer, and a constable from Bethesda, and the old verger and gravedigger, Pritchard, with his shirt sleeves rolled back and a great spade in his hand. He wore pale grey

corduroy trousers powdered with dried mud and dust. His long cadaverous features were also greyish white, his bristly grey eyelashes hung over sunken eyes. An old parson's hat covered his long white hair, and a faded coloured handkerchief was tied beneath his chin.

"This is a bad business," he cried. The rector turned and stared in amazement at Nest when she said proudly:

"I have brought Lord Cadvan to see the tomb."

He answered in a high pitched singing voice as if he were reciting a prayer:

"A terrible desecration has fallen upon us, woe unto the child of a man who has brought sorrow and disgrace upon the church of Nant y Glo."

The blood rushed to Nest's head. She pushed her way through the group of men. When she looked down she uttered a loud cry, and she would have fallen had not Cadvan caught her in his arms.

The tomb was a ruin! No longer did the peaceful features and graceful form of Myfanwy proclaim the genius of Anwyl. Not a vestige remained of the masterpiece that had attracted sightseers to the hallowed spot.

"Terrible indeed," muttered the old grave-digger. "Many a good shilling did I pocket during the summer months from visitors who came to see the carving."

"And the poor-box will suffer too," grumbled Jones, "nice little bit did the English put in after a look round the place."

Cadvan saw that the tomb had not been desecrated by unskilled hands, for the carving was completely obliterated by rough but regular chiselling.

Suddenly Nest broke away from Cadvan, and she tugged at the rector's age-worn coat-sleeve.

"Who did this thing?" she cried passionately. "If I could see him, I would kill him!"

"Well then, it is your own father who you would kill," answered the rector, in great surprise. "Where were you, my poor girl, when Anwyl was taken along to Nant y Glo, early this morning, like a madman!"

"Oh! I have been away. I have only just come back. Cruel he is to bring this sorrow."

"Disgrace too, my girl, for he must be prosecuted. I could not sleep last night," the rector went on, "I heard a sound in the churchyard, like groaning, I thought at last that it must be some animal who had come to grief, and when it was light I came to this spot. There was a man chipping away at the Anwyl tomb, destroying it, and talking to himself. A madman fit for Denbigh, I thought. 'Stop,' I cried, 'I will have the law on you,' and then the man faced me, and it was your father. When I spoke to him, he only laughed and said, that what was once the work of love, was now the tomb of hate.' He threatened me with his chisel and mallet. It took three men to get him to his home."

There was a long silence, and then very quietly Nest turned to Cadvan.

"Take me home, but this is not the time for you to enter."

Cadvan answered:

"Maelgwyn must return with me."

A brooding silence rested upon Nant y Glo. Within the kitchen she saw a man seated on the settle, there were a pair of crutches by his side. He sprang up, a gaunt, pale, agitated figure.

"Oh! Maelgwyn, Maelgwyn," cried Nest, "what does it all mean. I am frightened, never have I been so frightened," her arms were thrust wildly around his neck. He crushed his mouth upon hers, smothering her pitiful cry: "Oh! don't let them part us, dear heart!"

CHAPTER XVI

ON YOUR SIDE

THE poignancy of Nest's cry revealed how deeply she had suffered during the intervening hours between her departure and return to Nant y Glo. Too late to repine now, the harm was done ! Like a tame bird set free from a cage to pierce the unknown in the limitless spaces of the air, and to be persecuted by the freeborn songsters of the wilds, Nest had been sent away from the home that sheltered her.

For the time being Maelgwyn could do nothing but hold her in his arms and try to soothe her, whilst she sobbed out the story of the scene in the churchyard. And as she lay trembling against him, he found himself hating his uncle. . . . It was all Cadvan's fault, this awful tragedy of the demented man in the bedroom upstairs. It was the trick of an unhuman fiend, Maelgwyn thought furiously ! " All his life he has lived to destroy. I'll defy him ! After all, I am his heir ; he dare not treat me badly when it comes to the point. He will never foul his own nest . . . "

Struggling to recover her composure, Nest said piteously :

" It is not true that my father is mad ? "

It was then that another terror gripped Maelgwyn. What would Nest say when she knew the truth, that it was the venomous jealousy of his uncle that had brought this sorrow and disgrace upon her ?

"Dr. Howell says that he has been over-working. His symptoms point to a nervous breakdown. At such periods it is quite possible for a wave of temporary insanity to pass over any one of us."

Betti came in hurriedly. Even her rosy cheeks were pale. She looked dazed, like a woman who had experienced a great shock.

"Thank Heaven you are back, Miss Nest!" she cried. "The master is lying like a log; he will take no notice of anyone. A black crow sat on the apple tree when I was hanging out the clothes yesterday, and I said to Hew, 'Nasty happenings there will be; see the crow bach, sure signs of sorrow. Funeral, maybe.'"

So deep was Nest's distress that Betti's remarks had little effect upon her. Betti's superstitions were a byword in Nant y Glo; sometimes events suggested that her weird prophecies were correct, at other times results rather detracted from her fame than otherwise.

Nest forgot all about Lord Cadvan waiting by the bridge. She went upstairs with Betti. Dr. Howell was standing by the bedside, a puzzled, solitary figure. Ifor Anwyl was on his back, listless, motionless, broken like a great tree thrust to earth by a merciless storm.

"Nant y Glo seems to be having a run of bad luck," Howell said to Nest. "As soon as one patient is healed, I find another one."

Nest took no notice of his words; she fell on her knees beside her father and kissed him passionately, crying in a low, pained voice:

"Little Father, I have come home! Forgive me for leaving you. If I had taken your warning, this sorrow might not have visited us."

Anwyl did not answer, but his fluttering eyelids betrayed his consciousness.

"I shouldn't do that if I were you," Howell remonstrated to Nest. "You are only distressing the patient. I am afraid he has had a shock. I have questioned Betti on the subject, but she declares this is not the case. Your father was working all yesterday in his shed. He must have slipped out when the place was quiet. Curious is it not, that he should wish to destroy the work he prized more than anything else! Personally I consider it a most interesting case for a psycho-analyst. Physically he is sound; mentally—frankly, it's a rotten business!"

"What can I do to make him well?"

Howell shook his head.

"Food and rest, that is all I can order at present. Change of scene would be good for him, but he is a stubborn man. I have sent one of your men for medicine. See that your father takes it regularly. If he talks, fall in with his whims. It is our only chance of bringing him back to normal conditions."

Howell made his way downstairs. Nest stood dejectedly in the centre of the room, blaming herself bitterly for her headstrong ways. Youth is all emotion, all joyousness or sadness, there is no intermediate state. You cannot curb its restlessness or confidence in its actions. Experience is the only antidote to an untrained mind, seething with aims and ambitions and ready to fall in and out of love, like an acrobat flinging golden balls into the air and catching them at will. But Nest's love for Maelgwyn was deeper than the usual volatile kittenish emotion of the *ingénue*. Hunger for mother love had endowed Nest with the deeper elemental power of loving, for the art of loving is as great an art as the gift of attracting it. She was the super-feminine type envied by her sex, and hated too, albeit she was the type whom men find irresistible.

"Why have you come back?"

Nest started. Her father's voice sounded so strange, that for an instant she hardly recognised it. In a moment she was at his side, with her warm face pressed against his cold features. She longed to cry out, "Father bach, why did you do it?" but she conquered the impulse; she felt his thin, trembling hands groping for her as if he were in the dark, and once again came that hollow, broken cry:

"Why did you come back?"

"I only went to tell Lord Cadvan about Maelgwyn's accident. You know we love each other deeply."

"Fool!"

"Don't distress yourself." She felt him shivering as if he were seized with a sort of ague.

"You are of my blood; is it thicker than water? Will my child leave me as my faith has done?"

"I shall always be your child, but I want your blessing. I must marry Maelgwyn."

"I will never consent to such a marriage."

"Oh, Father, I know the reason now; Lord Cadvan told me that my mother loved you, that indeed was a triumph! You would not have your child different to her mother? She followed the call of her heart and found happiness."

"That is a lie. I did not give her happiness. Every night that she lay against my heart feigning love, she was harbouring feelings of resentment against me and dreaming of another man."

"It is not true?" Nest cried out in anguish.

"You were not told of the letter that came to me?"

Nest shook her head.

"Bring my coat, hanging over the chair back."

Nest fell in with his whim and Anwyl roused himself and searched the pockets of his coat, and soon Nest was

reading the letters which had come to him from Lord Cadvan.

“ It is a cruel thing, a cruel thing ! ”

There was a tense pause, broken at last by Anwyl's eager voice :

“ Then you are on my side, not on her side, or on their side ? ”

Remembering the warning that Howell had given to her, Nest answered :

“ I am on your side.”

And with a quivering sigh, Anwyl sank back, and like a child worn out with weeping, he fell asleep.

CHAPTER XVII

ONLY TRUST ME !

LORD CADVAN paced up and down for half an hour. Not once during all the long years that had intervened since Myfanwy had jilted him, had he dared to visit the spot where she lived. Secretly he had always wished to see it—now his desire was gratified. There it was, the grey stone dwelling wherein she had suffered, endured and passed away to her fathers. What a fate ! He passed his hands across his face and muttered : “ Cruel, cruel fate ! ” He was glad that he had made Anwyl suffer, when, confronted by the desecrated tomb, he had tasted of the fruits of his vengeance.

He stared at Nant y Glo. What tragedy was there ! almost as great as the bitter tragedy that had come to him years and years ago. He unbuttoned his coat, took out his watch and studied it. A few minutes later Howell left the house, Hew following and hoping to get the latest news about his master, helped the doctor to start his two-seater car. Howell’s sharp, ferrety eyes quickly recognised Cadvan, in spite of his shabby attire ; besides, the luxurious Daimler drawn up at the side of the roadway bore the Cadvan arms.

He did not wait to be addressed, but hurriedly alighting, he asked in a rather obsequious manner :

“ Have I the honour of addressing Lord Cadvan ? ”

“ Yes, that’s me all right.”

“ My name is Howell. I am Captain Cadvan’s

doctor. I hope you have come to take him home, my lord. As a matter of fact, I was wondering what to do for the best as I came out. It's been a rum experience for a man in the Captain's position, having to put up with such surroundings." He nodded towards Nant y Glo. "But in one way the Captain was wise to fall in with my wishes; better to hobnob with people like the Anwyls for a week or two, than to run any risk of shortening of the leg."

Cadvan grinned.

"Refreshing to hear such excellent views in these democratic days."

Howell flushed. Cadvan was laughing at him; he had an uncomfortable sensation of feeling a fool. Cadvan regarded those placed in less prosperous circumstances than himself as special creations for his patronage.

"At any rate, as Captain Cadvan's doctor, he has my full permission to leave to-day," Howell went on, "and it's just as well for him to get out of the place before there is any further scandal."

"Now you are getting a little out of my depth."

"Old Anwyl has always been known to be eccentric, but he went off his chump last night, and it was noised abroad Bethesda that he will be arrested for sacrilege."

"Yes, I know all about that. Thanks very much for your hint about the type of person with whom my nephew has been hobnobbing!" and he went off across the bridge. Maelgwyn was in the kitchen looking ill and worried.

For a few seconds the two men stared at one another in silence, the old man and the young man, reckoning each other up, secretly trying to gauge each other's strength.

That his nephew was a "handsome devil" Cadvan could not deny ; that he had stubbornness and strength of character was shown by the firm set of his jaws. Cadvan experienced a morbid pleasure in reflecting that Morvyth must have had a sharp bout between earthly gain and physical attraction, when she took the bald and podgy Hervey to her heart and left Maelgwyn to the sirens of the East and West. No wonder that she fell in with his wishes so nimbly, when he suggested a visit to the Castell. Aloud he said :

"Sorry you've had such a rotten time. However, I'll take you back straight away. I hear there's illness here." He was studying his nephew all the time he was talking. "It's years since we met. I suppose the women have told you long ago that you're a damned good looking chap."

Maelgwyn ignored his remarks, and he broke out passionately :

"Uncle, why did you send that letter ? It may kill the old man. . . ."

"Has Nest heard about it ?"

"I don't know ; she is with her father now. I shall never tell her of your cruelty. As for myself, Ifor Anwyl hates the sight of me. Of course," Maelgwyn stumbled on in his weakness and pride, for in his passion for Nest, he lost his sense of discretion ; "you must see how it is with me, now that I have met Nest. I love her, I want her for my wife. Let our marriage heal the breach. Bitterness never did anyone any good. I know about you and her mother. . . . After all, pride is a poor substitute for a contented spirit."

"Now that you know," was the cold, cutting reply, "if you are wise you will never mention that par-

ticular subject to me again. If it pleases me to study my own funeral, that is my affair ; I don't ask you, or anyone else, to do my business for me."

It was then that Nest came down the staircase. The two men saw that she was agitated, tears glistened on her long lashes, and for a moment Cadvan felt a twinge of remorse, but it quickly passed and his old cynicism returned.

"Nant y Glo is very attractive ; you women are funny cattle. I quite appreciate the fact that the tawdry glories of Castell Cadvan cannot be compared with this ! "

Nest muttered brokenly :

"Will sorrow never soften your cruel heart ? If you saw the evil you have done to my father, would you still smile ? "

"Evil I have done ? "

"I have seen the letters you sent to him ; and let me tell you now, that although my mother asked you to befriend me, I would die like a dog rather than forsake my father for you ! "

"Don't say things in anger, Nest."

She turned to Maelgwyn and placed her arms around his neck in her old artless, confidential manner.

"I love you, but love is not killed by the quarrels of other people ;" and she cried out to Cadvan : "I hate you ! "

Maelgwyn tried to remonstrate with her, but she heeded him not in her anguish ; she upbraided him for taking sides with his uncle, and Cadvan said coldly :

"I am sorry that there is more of peasant blood than blue blood in Myfanwy's child. I shall return to my car. I'll give you five minutes to join me, Maelgwyn ; if you are not there by that time, I shall return alone."

Nest was sobbing quietly to herself, and Maelgwyn gazed at her distressfully. Davy came in with some medicine from Bethesda.

"Dr. Howell sent me off for it directly he arrived this morning," he told Nest; but she kept her face buried in her hands. She was ashamed that a servant should see her agitation.

"Will you pack up my things quickly and put my bag in Lord Cadvan's car?"

Davy nodded. He went noisily up the narrow staircase, scratching his head disconsolately.

"And clean up my car, and bring it over to Castell Cadvan any day your mistress can spare you," Maelgwyn called after him.

Nest faced him furiously with tear-stained, quivering features.

"So you are going to let Lord Cadvan rule your life, take you away from me like this . . . you, my lover!"

"Your true lover, too," Maelgwyn answered, endeavouring to calm her. "Don't you see, my dear, if I cross him now, I shall make things far worse for you and for me. I am entirely at his mercy. If it were not for him, I should not have the means to remain in the army. I should not have the wherewithal to take up my position in the world, as heir to a great title like Cadvan. . . ."

"And would you let all these earthly considerations rob you of me?"

"I swear nothing shall part us," Maelgwyn declared. "Why should the jealousies of two men wreck you and me? Your father and my uncle have had their day! We will leave them to settle their own differences!"

Momentarily soothed by his argument, Nest dried her tears, and half smiling as she nestled up to him, she said:

"It is very hard for me. Lord Cadvan is a rich man my father poor, old and broken. I cannot desert him; you would not wish me to do that, Maelgwyn?"

"We must steer through these troubled waters with caution," he answered. "Only trust me."

He kissed and petted her, called her sweet names, and she clung to him and listened to his promises: how soon they would meet, how that love laughs at difficulties, and is eternally triumphant. . . . She saw him pass through the way of the door, heard the tap of his crutches along the path. He was across the bridge now . . . entering the car. . . . He had gone! She sank on her knees sobbing quietly, as if her heart would break. It is not easy for the emotional Celt to stem the tide of her grief. . . . It is relentless, awful, cruel like death. She felt Betti's arm around her, heard her rough words of comfort, but although her words were intended to bring solace, Betti's expression was as dismal as the countryside in winter time. The crow sitting on the apple tree . . . dear me! sure sign of bad luck!—this unlucky prophecy haunted the maid:

"Plenty of fish in the sea, if he doesn't come back!"

And Nest sprang up, her cheeks flaming with anger.

"He will come back," she cried. "Maelgwyn loves me!" and then she remembered she had not told him about Lady Morvyth.

CHAPTER XVIII

WHEN LOVE IS MOCKED

LORD CADVAN maintained a stolid silence after his nephew joined him. It was useless to deny the fact. He wanted Nest. The pearls which he had carefully placed in his pocket would go back to their old haunt in the safe. It had gratified him to see Nest wearing them, it hurt him in an indescribable way when she returned them with her guileless smile. When they rushed through Bangor, both men saw a great poster reared against a newsagent's window ledge :

SACRILEGE BY A WELL-KNOWN SCULPTOR IFOR ANWYL DESTROYS HIS WIFE'S TOMB.

Maelgwyn uttered an exclamation. He clenched his hands. It cost him all his strength not to turn upon the rigid figure by his side and hurl bitter invectives upon him. But this time he conquered his hot blood and sought refuge in silence. Cadvan had heard the cry, but he gave no sign. The great car made a return journey across the Menai bridge, and cut across the island, along the drive. . . . Maelgwyn loved the old place, loved every stone of it. Pride of race, pride of this imposing heritage had been instilled into him ever since he could remember. Self must ever be sacrificed for the traditions that were handed down from one Cadvan to another throughout the ages . . .

"By the way," his uncle remarked before alighting, "several people are staying here. Rhys Morgan, who was resident at Handinugger, Miss Pryse, and Morvyth Hervey."

Cadvan could not resist watching the effect of his words. That it was disconcerting information was betrayed by the flush on his nephew's thin features.

"Surprised?" he grinned. "You damn well ought to be! and flattered too. She's a deuced fine woman. All the Bucks in the place pay court to her, and she doesn't care a twopenny for any one of them. Loves you, that's her folly."

The chauffeur opened the door and helped Maelgwyn to alight, and all the time he was seeking the opportunity that never came, to expostulate:

"That's all over. She can't care for me. She gave me up for Hervey, and . . ."

He was in the great hall now, stirred by its dignity, glad to get there. He had thought of it, dreamt of it, and now he was here. What did Nest think of it? His thoughts wandered, searched for pleasant playgrounds; his fancy was like a bee sipping honey from a rose.

Lady Morvyth came upon him suddenly as he was making his way along the colonnade to the suite of rooms on the east side of the Castell.

"Maelgwyn!" her voice trembled with pleasure. She did not try to control it, but allowed her Welsh blood to run riot, and to betray the secret that which a year ago would have thrilled him with ecstasy; but now it only created a vague unrest. This woman loved him! She was his for the asking. She was flinging that which once he had sought, shamelessly, before him. His discomfort increased as she went on talking.

"A girl stayed the night here, a cunning little thing. She told me all about the accident, and how she had been looking after you. If only I had known that you were so helpless and so near Cadvan——" she paused, looking up into his eyes, and added half banteringly : "Do you think I should have allowed a stranger to take my place?"

Maelgwyn shuddered. The situation hurt him.

"This is awkward, Morvyth," he remonstrated. "Don't forget that much water has flowed beneath the bridge since last we met."

"There are some things, like wine, that are improved with time—experience—a woman's experience. Time taught me that there was only one Maelgwyn in the world!"

* * * * *

Gradually Ifor Anwyl became more rational in his bearing. Much excitement prevailed in the district over the desecrated tomb. Anwyl had been formally summoned by the authorities; he did not appear at the police court. Lewis Jestyn sought a lawyer friend, and even Howell played the game and declared that the personal appearance of his patient would seriously jeopardise his life. The Court accepted the medical opinion and Anwyl was bound over to appear when called upon.

The Reverend William Roberts came to Nant y Glo. He prayed for the stricken man, in the kitchen. His congregation consisted of two persons. He knelt down in his shabby greenish-black trousers upon the red-tiled floor, and exhorted the Almighty to take away the evil spirit that was persecuting Anwyl.

Betti, with her fat legs tucked under her weighty body, also knelt, with one eye on the kettle, hoping it would boil up in time to give the good man a cup of

hot tea. Nest was also kneeling in front of a wooden chair, and she wept. A great calamity had fallen upon her, but the next moment she was chiding herself for her lack of faith. No matter what love might cost her, her fate was sealed, and she remembered a verse she had read :

"Sitting by my side,
At my feet,
So he breathed the air I breathed,
Satisfied !
I too at love's brim
Touched the sweet :
I would die if death bequeathed
Sweet to him."

Anwyl came into the kitchen when the rector was exhorting the Almighty on his behalf. He had relapsed into a dour, broken man, refusing to go to his shed, refusing to read ; eating little, sitting before the fire with his hands clasped loosely before him, thinking deeply and taking no interest in his surroundings.

Roberts heard his footstep, and he got up laboriously from his knees and said :

"I have prayed that peace may come to you ; but pray you too, for the way of the transgressor is hard."

Betti, rather embarrassed that her master should see her on her knees, got up noisily, and Nest also stood up.

"You waste your prayers on me," Anwyl remonstrated. "I do not want anyone's pity. It was considerate of you to come, all the same, neither God nor man can heal me."

And this was his attitude. He shrank from meeting his fellows. Like a wounded animal he sought to be left alone.

A fortnight passed and Nest received no message from Maelgwyn. Davy had driven his car to Castell Cadvan, and Nest waited excitedly for his return.

But Davy had not seen "the Captain." He had been told that he was out with the guns.

One morning Marged Anwyl arrived on her pony "Bess." She made a strange picture, riding a side saddle, with a great basket slung across one arm. She was attired in a black cloak, and a blue stuff blouse was worn over a grey, blue and red striped skirt. Her black hair, streaked with grey, was partly concealed under a red handkerchief passed over her head and tied beneath her chin, and upon this head covering she wore a mushroom-shaped hat. Her face was round and bronzed, her skin coarsened by exposure to storm and wind. Her mouth was large, her teeth strong and white, her limbs muscular, her hands well-shaped, albeit they were toil-stained.

Alighting from her horse, she called loudly :

"Is there anybody about now?"

Davy came from the roundhouse. She alighted, and with the basket still slung over her arm, she strode up the path. On the threshold she met Nest.

"Well, girl fach," Marged cried, "I have come to see that cousin of mine. Nice little scandal I read in the paper when I was wrapping up some trout which I caught yesterday. Been having a row with the parson? Better be like me and have nothing to do with any of them. Dogs are better than men or women. . . ."

A faint smile curved Nest's lips, for she remembered her lover's words :

"You can take it from me that when a woman makes a remark like that, it is because she's past her first youth : sour grapes, that's the trouble."

"Glad you're in a good humour, any way," said Marged, catching the girl's smile. "I got up early, shoed 'Bess,' did some shopping in Bethesda, and came on here. There's horse-jumping in a day or two at

Llandair. Better come along and have a bit of fun in the grounds of old Gwydyr. I'll bring the cart and pick you up at the top of the pass."

"I'd like to come very much indeed."

In the kitchen Marged placed her basket on the table, unfastening her cloak, she threw it over the back of a chair and made her way to the fireplace, where Anwyl was sitting in a disconsolate position with his head buried in his hands.

"Well, well, Ifor," she said, picking up her skirt and fumbling in a hanging pocket that was suspended around her waist by a piece of black tape. She extracted a small clay pipe, lit it and took her seat on the oak settle beside him.

"Quarrels with parsons do me good, man. Too self-righteous they are altogether. I was glad when I read in the paper that you had been having a rumpus with one of the lazy fellows. Tell me about it."

Anwyl raised his head and stared at his kinswoman.

"The quarrel was not with Roberts. He is fair in his dealings, and religious according to his way."

"I always thought there would be some tit-bit of gossip about Myfanwy in the end."

"Why did you say that?" Anwyl's voice was harsh and strained. In old days Marged and he had played together as children; even then she was more masculine than feminine. Savagely she had resented the marriage of Ifor, for she had secretly regarded him as a suitable mate for herself.

"If you have had no quarrel with Roberts, then your quarrel must be with the dead. Well, well, that is what I seem to gather by the story in the paper."

"Keep to your fox-killing and your haymaking!" was Anwyl's angry retort.

"Maybe it pays better than being a sculptor."

"Your tongue is as stinging as your whip."

"I have not come here to quarrel with you but to ask Nest to come and stop up at Craig Wen for a day or two. Yesterday I was out fishing near my place when a motor came up, and Lord Cadvan got out. I had not spoken to him before, but often had I seen him at Eisteddfodau. He was shabby as an old scarecrow, but civil in his speech. 'You are Marged of Craig Wen?' says he; and I let go my fishing rod in surprise and uncoiled my skirt, and dropped a curtsy. 'Yes, I am Marged of Craig Wen,' says I, 'and well I know you.'"

Anwyl shaded his face with one hand whilst she was talking, and to himself he was thinking:

"If ever a man is tortured, I am that man!"

Nest came forward out of the shadows, deeply agitated. She put her hand on Marged's shoulders and said:

"We keep my father very quiet, Auntie Marged. You see for yourself he is not well—not shaved—his clothes . . ."

"What does it matter how an old man looks, or what he wears?" Marged retorted crossly. "When they want to do a bit of courting, they put on their Sabbath clothes quick enough."

"Auntie Marged . . ." Still Nest endeavoured to protest.

"Tut-tut, girl! I knew Ifor Anwyl before you were born, what is good for him and what is bad. I have not come here to talk pretty-pretty, but to do a deal. You have a harp here, fine it is; I have got a harp too, for sale. I finished it six months ago. The harp that I have made with my own hands, is as good as any in Wales, but . . ."

Nest flushed, and she interrupted anxiously:

"Does Lord Cadvan want to buy a harp from you?"

"He wants an old one. I told him that I knew where there was such a harp, the one that you play on here," Marged answered. "Now what does it matter to you, girl fach, what sort of harp you play upon, as long as the tune is all right?"

"Don't say any more," Nest begged.

"Why not, little wench? Good am I for a deal, and lean are the days, old are my bones, and I would like to go to fairs around the country without thinking of the money. Costly affairs are all things that are nice. Anwyl here will join in the deal if he is a wise man."

"Take Marged to see the harp."

Nest gazed at her father in surprise. A week or so back, such a suggestion would never have passed from his lips.

Nest led the way to her room, and she took off the silk shawl that had covered the harp and set the instrument before the woman.

Marged sat upon the little bed and drew the harp towards her, and she passed her strong fingers over the strings.

"Fine and deep is the tone," she admitted. "A good price will Cadvan pay. Poor you are at Nant y Glo."

"Marged," Nest answered earnestly, "what do you really wish us to do?"

"Well, well, if only you would come up to Craig Wen and let Lord Cadvan hear you play it . . ."

Nest shivered. She seemed to hear his cold, cruel voice when he remarked to her:

"Suppose if I said, 'Find a way of bringing that harp to the Castell, play to me, and if it is true that Maelgwyn wishes to marry you, I will give my consent!'"

If Anwyl in his anger sold her mother's harp, how Cadvan would triumph! Besides, suppose if the day should come when she would wish to go to him and say . . . What could she say? Where was Maelgwyn . . . why was he silent? . . . In anguish Nest stamped her foot and she said passionately:

"My father is ill now, this harp belonged to my mother!" for a great fear had fallen upon Nest, and she knew in her father's present mood he would stop at nothing to rid himself of all memory of the woman who had wronged him.

Marged's hard features relaxed.

"A useless piece of goods was Anwyl's wife," she said; but they heard Betti's heavy footsteps, and she entered quickly.

"Come you here, Miss Nest fach!" and outside the door she whispered: "the Captain is waiting for you the other side of the bridge. For fear of angering your father he will not come in."

Marged heard the loud whisper.

"Got a sweetheart? Hook him while you're young; there aren't enough to go round since the war."

"Tell him I'm coming this minute." Nest straightened her hair, studying herself anxiously in the little mirror on her dressing table, her heart was throbbing to the glorious refrain. "Maelgwyn . . . is here!" "Wait till I get back. Give Auntie Marged dinner," she cried to Betti.

Anwyl did not move when she passed behind his chair . . . and once again Nest was afraid—afraid that he knew that Maelgwyn was waiting for her.

She crossed the bridge. There he was, strong, virile, no crutches, just as she had seen him on the day that she had first met him at Trifaen. He caught her

in his arms. There was no one to witness their passionate embrace but the mountains, and the swaying trees, and the cloud-ridden skies . . .

"Maelgwyn, dear heart, why did you not write to me?" she cried.

"But I did!" His voice was a little unsteady. He was shocked, distressed . . . and the thought came to his mind, "So great is his hatred for us Cadvans, that Anwyl is intercepting my letters to Nest!" He must put her off the scent. It was too terrible, she must not know that not only had her father made their name ridiculous throughout the country, but he was a mean thief—a thief of her happiness.

Nest turned to him passionately, pressing her fingers into his arm, squeezing it against her body, proclaiming in a hundred and one subtle ways the joy of their being together again.

"It was horrible . . . horrible! Every day I waited, but no letter came. Then . . ." She flushed and went on agitatedly: "Oh, I don't know what I thought, but I took it in my head to meet Meredith—the postman, you know; but never was there a letter. And one day I said to him: 'Do you never have a letter for me?' and he said, 'Well no, indeed to goodness!' and then I knew you had not written."

The blood rushed to Maelgwyn's head. Then the treachery was not at Nant y Glo, but at Castell Cadvan!

"I wrote to you."

"Oh, Maelgwyn, they are trying to part us!"

He did not answer for a moment, because he did not wish to alarm her by his own uneasiness.

"Letters do go astray sometimes!" He tried to laugh it off with the remark: "It was rotten for me too, you did not write."

"I was not going to write to you if you did not write to me," she declared.

He kissed her on the lips, and she trembled. It was wonderful to be loved . . . to be adored by such a man.

They took the road towards Trifaen. Maelgwyn left the car against a low wall of loosely piled stones which so frequently marks the division of property in Wales. They sat upon the grassy slopes of the mountain, but after the first excitement of reunion had passed, Nest found herself perplexed by a worrying thought. Maelgwyn was just as loving, just as demonstrative, but she had a curious feeling that he was keeping something back.

"I rode to hounds yesterday," he was saying. "It was glorious to be in the saddle again. It was ripping riding across country. Uncle's been generous, I have got a couple of fine hunters. . . ."

In a very quiet voice Nest asked :

"Is Lady Morvyth still at the Castell ?"

"Oh yes, rather ! She's a devilish fine horsewoman. Forgot that you had met her."

"Did you say anything to your uncle about our marriage ?"

Maelgwyn answered cautiously :

"I told him I loved you. He didn't say much, but he was not enthusiastic. We must go slow, pet lamb, at any rate for a month or two. If he cuts up rough, we should be in a deuce of a hole. It would be suicidal to marry without his consent."

A woman has greater powers of intuition than a man. She can more readily hide her thoughts, set subtle traps, and banter with artless words. But when love is on the wane, although she may be wise enough to keep her knowledge a secret for a season, she will never

rest until she has striven to remove the canker from her heart. . . . Then, like a summer storm, the lightnings of her suppressed anger will flash forth, and the errant lover, who prided himself upon his skill in handling women, will listen to a tirade that strips him of his motley and tinsel. He knows himself at last, a craven coward too weak to say "I made a mistake, it was not love. I wanted— but lust, passion." Or he will say: "Great is my sorrow, it was not a mate that I wanted, but a banking account."

Nest quivered when she heard Maelgwyn's words: "It was not my fault I could not come before, little love. My uncle has guests. Besides, I have only just discarded my crutches!" And again: "My uncle is an old man . . . he has the power to leave me in the gutter."

Nest grew pale, but she did not move. Her head was lying upon Maelgwyn's shoulder. Primitive love is a dangerously exacting emotion. It is cruel, jealous, suspicious. . . . Nest rushed on to her doom, and her heart almost stopped beating with agony when she asked:

"You mean that if your uncle does not give his consent to our marriage, we must part?"

CHAPTER XIX

PRIDE—THE HYPOCRITE

NEST was losing faith in love. No matter how deeply a man may be intrigued by a woman, he is always a little afraid of her when she asks: "Will you always love me? . . ." Love is a great adventure, directly it becomes a personally conducted trip, it is time to ring down the curtain! Maelgwyn experienced a shade of annoyance at Nest's first hint of doubt.

"Have I not told you that I love you?" he asked, scarcely troubling to hide the irritation which her suspicions caused.

Nest felt his displeasure. She was ashamed, and she answered contritely:

"Oh, yes, I know that, dear heart, but the greater one's love, the greater one's fears."

"Even a short acquaintance with my uncle should have shown you that when he decides on a certain course of action, it is very difficult to persuade him to change."

Nest slipped her cold fingers into Maelgwyn's hand.

"Well, yes indeed."

"That is why we must be patient."

"But you did tell him that you wished to marry me?"

"Yes."

Nest's face darkened, afraid of the truth, and yet

forced ahead by that feminine curiosity which is often such a deadly enemy to a woman's peace of mind, she found herself asking the fatal question.

"And what did he say?"

There was a tense pause, and at last Maelgwyn answered in a low strained voice:

"Little pet, is it wise to torture yourself and me?"

"I would rather know the truth," came back Nest's quiet answer, but the tremor in her voice betrayed the anxiety with which she awaited his reply.

"He told me that I was at perfect liberty to marry whom I pleased, but that if I married without his consent . . ." he broke off, drawing her closer to him and folding her in his arms, he added in tones that thrilled her: "Nest, you are the only girl I shall ever love. I've another two months at Cadvan. What is the use of discussing a horror that we may never have to face?"

"What is that horror, boy fach?"

"I am a soldier, educated at Sandhurst. I know nothing about work in the ordinary sense. I couldn't ask any woman to risk starvation with me. Such folly would be a direct denial of my love."

"Starvation with love, is better than riches and no love!" Nest faltered.

"Sounds nice," Maelgwyn admitted, "but impracticable. It is an uncomfortable theory."

Nest's pride came to her aid, and a little voice whispered: "Don't let him see that you are hurt. You love him, and love is pain. If it is worth while endure its pricks, if it is not worth while, throw it away." And in this manner her better nature came to the rescue, the golden side of Nest, the warm Celtic temperament that gives generously without thought

of reward. A true woman like the Christian martyrs is always willing to suffer for her faith or her love.

She brushed doubt aside, she sprang to her feet, feigned smiles and joyousness of heart, and deceived Maelgwyn utterly that she was not entirely happy and comforted by his words.

He took her to Capel Curig, to the hotel that stands at the side of the lake. They had tea on the terrace, and in the pool in the garden, the trout were so tame that when Nest threw pieces of cake to them, they came to the surface and fed greedily. Beyond the lakes rising in his majesty, the forked peaks of Snowdon showed through the haze. The very centre of Eryri can be reached from this romantic spot. Mountain and dale a panorama of unspeakable beauty fascinated Nest and her lover. The base of the crooked mountain Moel Siabod and the Glyder bach, and in the distance the gateway to the inner recesses of the Snowdon range and the wonder valley of the Gwynnant—Pont y Gwryd.

They talked of Nest's mother, and of her father. Nest said with a sigh: "Strange is it not that love can destroy!"

But Maelgwyn knowing that they were on dangerous ground again fenced with the question, and before they parted he promised to come every other day to Nant y Glo.

It was tea-time when Nest reached home. Betti met her on the threshold.

"Cross is the master bach, that you have been so long away. Pity that you ever met the Captain. For sure as fate, if you persist in seeing him, Miss Nest, there will be a parting of the ways between you and your father."

Betti was right. Anwyl was angry.

"You crept away like an evil doer," said he turning his unshaven haggard features towards her, when she entered. "Did I not put it to you fairly? Did you not say you were on my side? When I asked Marged why you had left the house, she said that a sweetheart was waiting for you across the bridge."

"It is not Maelgwyn's fault that he is a Cadvan."

"He will trick you, he is as merciless as a hawk. He will rob me, he will say a tooth for a tooth."

"Little father, don't worry yourself," Nest begged. "I do not know what to do. I love Maelgwyn and I love you. I want you both!"

"Once married to Lord Cadvan's heir and you are dead to me."

Nest shuddered. Here was tragedy, two old men nearing the end of life's journey, and with bitter hatred in their hearts, striving against the workings of fate to destroy the happiness of youth.

"I have told Marged that you shall go to Craig Wen and to the horse jumping at Llandair. You will go the day after to-morrow."

"Not on that day, father bach, the day after."

"And I have sold the harp," Anwyl went on, disregarding her protest. "Marged is sending a cart for it and you can go to Craig Wen at the same time."

"But why have you done this thing," cried Nest, "the harp belonged to my mother and it was precious to me. You hate Lord Cadvan and yet you will allow Auntie Marged to have the harp, which she will sell to him."

"Well, why not?" Anwyl answered harshly. "It was Myfanwy's harp. Cadvan can have it—at a price. But there is one thing that he shall never have from me if I can prevent it, neither he nor his nephew, and that is Myfanwy's child!"

"If I do not marry Maelgwyn I will marry no man."

"I know the stuff that men like Maelgwyn as you call him are made of. He will always think of the side on which his bread is buttered."

"That is not true," cried Nest angrily. She passed out, and she said to Betti :

"The prayers of the preacher have not taken the evil spirit away from my father. I am going for Lewis Jestyn. I will bring him back here, and beg of him to reason with my father."

"If only he would use his chisel again," sighed Betti, "he sits and broods and brings misery to us all . . ."

CHAPTER XX

SHADOWS OF THE PAST

LEWIS JESTYN's dwelling, "Ugly House," was set on a quarried niche at the foot of a mountain, the base was barren, but higher up the slopes were sparsely covered with fir trees, which gave the appearance of rows of Christmas trees upon a greengrocer's stall at Christmas time. Adjoining the house was Jestyn's studio made of grey stone, with a door opening into his dining room. The studio had a glass roof, and shutters that could be drawn across to regulate the light and shade. The stained wooden floor was covered with Eastern rugs, the walls with rough sketches from Jestyn's brush. Vivid sketches of the East, blue hills fading into a lavender sky. A Maharajah's palace with snowy walls and terraces rising like a fairy creation out of the still sapphire of a lake, which contrasted sharply with the banyan trees and groups of mimosa. Sketches of remote flat country. Forests suggesting a brooding stillness, the blue wing of a jay making a bright dash of colour against dark trees. Masses of treeless rock, the snowy wastes of the Himalayas, all bore testimony to the genius of Lewis Jestyn.

Wearing his brown velvet coat, his reddish hair ruffled and singing in a low voice :

"Crawshay Bailey's brother Joe,
Is a railway guard you know.
And the man what takes the ticket
Is a clipper playing cricket !

Wass you effer see, wass yon effer see."

His thumb was stuck through his large palette. He was laying on colour rapidly. It was indeed the mystic spirit of the East that breathed from his canvas. The distant ruins of a temple, formed the background of the picture. All the mystery, beauty and passion of India, suddenly confronted the onlooker in the perfect form of a woman! Her sari had been thrown aside, the small oval face with its exquisite features was revealed. Her dark luminous eyes, her silky black hair garlanded with jasmine blossoms rippled back from a low broad brow. Her slender hands and beautiful arms covered with priceless jewels were folded across her breast. The soft silken sari with its heavy gold embroideries fell in graceful folds down to her small feet, and defined the beauty of her limbs. Two or three dancing girls belonging to the temple were peeping through the bushes. . . . Jestyn painted on. His features glowing with enthusiasm, this was his masterpiece . . . Motibae the Pearl, the secret which he had confided to Nest!

There was a furtive knock on the door, and his old servant, Gitto Owain entered. Gitto was fifty with white hair, and a ruddy countenance. He wore a discarded tweed suit of Jestyn's. Mari, his wife, was the cook at Ugly House, and with her husband she was responsible for the work required in Jestyn's home.

"Oh, now, Gitto man, this is too bad," sighed Jestyn. "I told you I was in the mood for work, that I must paint all the day."

"There is a gentleman to see you. He has luggage, says you know him well whatever. I told him you was very busy, but he will take no notice at all of what I say."

Jestyn put down his palette. He passed out of the studio into the hall. For a short space he did not

"I'll help you upstairs when you are ready to go, sir."

"Thank you very much. I'll come soon. Sleep is a gift from God!"

* * * * *

In the car that bore them to the St. David's Day dinner, Nest was silent, and preoccupied. Rhys declared that he had never seen her look so "adorably attractive." He also said many pleasant things about her golden frock which would have brought great joy to the artistic soul of Daran.

"You are a real Welsh fairy princess," said Rhys. He wanted to hug her and crush her. Hot headed youth would not have hesitated to do so, it has no more thought for the wreckage of frocks and frills, than it has for the reckless prodigality with which it showers its physical energy upon the adored. "I mustn't spoil your frock," he said gruffly.

She smiled dismally. What would Maelgwyn care for a hundred and one frocks, if they had found themselves alone in a closed car! However she was thankful for Morgan's discretion. Her thoughts were responsible for the glow and magnetism which surrounded her . . . Love! No beauty specialist in the world has anything to compare with this great bestower of loveliness.

Nest left her black velvet cloak with its luxurious ermine collar in the cloak room, and then she joined Morgan at the entrance to the reception room. It seemed as if everybody stopped talking and stared at the elegant girlish figure, beside the tall handsome man, with an order hanging on a purple ribbon just below his immaculate white tie. He wore a row of miniature medals on the left hand side of his coat. Rhys was a vain man. He was just a little piqued that Nest had not admired his "dog collar" as he

called his order. He was certainly a distinguished figure, and tremendously proud when he heard the steward announce :

“ Miss Nest Anwyl,
Sir Rhys Morgan.”

Three distinguished Welshmen were acting as hosts, and one of them was Lord Cadvan. When he met Nest a mocking smile greeted her, and he said in a low voice :

“ This is a pleasant surprise ? ”

She tried to get away from him. Sir Rhys Morgan was waiting, not ill-pleased that such a distinguished and powerful man should go out of his way to pay so much attention to his future wife.

Cadvan glanced across at him and said :

“ Just a minute, Morgan, I haven’t congratulated Nest yet.” For the moment he ignored his duties as a host ; he led her to a quiet corner.

She said passionately :

“ Why have you treated Maelgwyn so badly ? ”

“ I like that,” Lord Cadvan retorted suavely. “ You lecture me for the ill that I have done to Maelgwyn, while you—you mercenary little devil, engage yourself to Morgan ! If you wanted a man old enough to be your father, why didn’t you think of me ? ”

“ Oh ! why make fun of me ! ”

“ How long are you staying in London ? ”

“ For ever ! ”

“ Nonsense, Nest, you don’t belong to this sink of iniquity, the mountains and valleys are the true setting for you.”

“ Nice talk,” she said angrily, “ and you promised to show me the world if I’d live at Cadvan.”

“ The promise still holds good. Come and see me, Nest. I have a lot to say to you.”

“ Oh, I can’t come,” she began to make excuses, the

order rang out through the room: "Ladies and gentlemen, pray be seated for dinner." Then she thought, "Perhaps after all I could persuade Maelgwyn and his uncle to make it up," she wavered, Lord Cadvan was watching her intently.

"1 Chesterfield Place," he said. "I shall be there for a week."

"Very well, I'll come . . . one day."

"Sorry, Nest, but I must drag you away now" Morgan interposed.

"You shouldn't have such an attractive fiancée," said Cadvan with his grin.

When Nest sat at the high table by Rhys's side and the London Welsh choir took their places in the gallery at the end of the room, they sang the glorious old tunes which she had known from babyhood. She felt uplifted, carried far above the sordid tumult, the petty meannesses and jealousies of every-day life. Before her were a sea of faces, men and women, hoary-headed men of toil, successful men, united by the greatest bond in the world, love of their country, joining in the magnificent refrain of "Hen wlad fy Nhadau."

The Archdruid of Wales gave an address, his scholarly tones rang out impressively. Then followed the Prime Minister, distinguished, aloof, a great man. A new idol of to-day, but where was the idol of yesterday?

Nest was a little nervous when Rhys got up to speak, so many eyes seemed to be watching her, and the man whom she had promised to marry.

He was a witty and accomplished speaker. He had a grip of his subject, he wanted to show Nest what a fine dog he was . . . but she did not hear him . . . another voice was ringing in her ears . . . a pleading voice. . .

"Then you agree, that youth must ever be sacrificed to age. Is it fair to you? Is it fair to me?"

CHAPTER XXXII

BEMOLD MY BELOVED !

PRINCESS MOTIBÆ arrived at Euston from North Wales about half-past nine. She dined in the train. She was composed, but secretly brimming over with excitement, and anxiety too, for Cursetjee was not the type of man with whom one would trifle lightly ; moreover, he might have tracked down Rhys before she had time to warn him of his danger. . . .

She took a taxi at Euston and gave directions to the driver. As they cut through Piccadilly, she looked out of the window and gazed with wonder at the brilliant, whirling electric signs which turned night into day, the heart of the world, blazing in a myriad fascinating hues.

When she arrived at the Cottage, the butler informed her on enquiry that Sir Rhys Morgan was dining out and would not return until late.

" It is very important that I see him as soon as possible. May I not wait ? "

The butler took her up to the music room. A bright fire was burning in the grate ; a silver tray bore decanters, soda-water and fruit. The beauty of the room was pleasing to Motibæ. She took off her fur-lined coat and in her silky Eastern garments she made a rare and striking figure. She knelt before the fire ; a delicious sense of security came upon her. Was she not in the house of her beloved ? She succumbed to

the exotic drowsiness that crept over her and she fell asleep. . . .

An hour or so later Sir Rhys and Nest arrived home from the St. David's Day dinner. Anwyl had long since gone to his room. Nest was tired, worried and extremely unhappy. Morgan's egotism when he was making his speech was a terrible revelation to her of the man as he really was, the thought of how little they really had in common was terrifying to her.

Rhys put his hands upon her shoulders and he gazed at her admiringly.

"You were the best-dressed woman in the room, Nest, and far the most beautiful one. Lord Cadvan seemed to be having a little passage of arms with you about something. What was it?"

She showed pettishness for the first time to the man whom she had promised to marry.

"It is his affair and mine," she answered quickly. "Nos Dawch."

Directly Morgan was alone the butler came in.

"There is a lady waiting to see you, sir."

"A lady!" Morgan was on the point of lighting a cigar: the light died out before he had accomplished his object. No one knew better than he did how greatly he dreaded the answer to his question, "What is her name?"

"She did not give her name, Sir. She is dark—foreign-looking. In the music room."

It was difficult for Morgan to analyse his feelings when he made his way up the staircase; the world seemed to be crashing around him. Nemesis—the Nemesis of past follies—was mocking him like some great monster arisen from the dead.

He entered the room cautiously, dreading what he might find. He stood like one turned to stone when he

faced the woman whom he had sought to cut so ruthlessly out of his life.

The gold bangles on her arm glowed in the shaded light; jewels scintillated in her ears, upon her neck and fingers. The small oval face was appealingly wistful, the dark-fringed eyelids alluring; her soft black hair was garlanded with jasmine blossom.

She sprang up with a low cry. The next moment, half crying and half laughing, she prostrated herself at Morgan's feet.

"Beloved!" she breathed passionately. "There is a saying that if Mahomet will not come to the mountain, the mountain must go to Mahomet."

"Get up, Motibae," said Morgan. He was unnerved. This woman had once been dear to him . . . she had given herself freely. He had been surfeited by her passion. He led her to the sofa. A chill passed through her when she regarded his stern, set features. She passed her arms around him and sought to woo him by the warmth of her caresses . . . but Morgan did not respond to her appeal. He said curtly:

"Why did you come?"

"Jewel of my heart," she said tremulously, "I have been warned by readers of the stars, of danger to my lord. For myself I do not fear death, but for you——"

"This is England."

"But I have heard even in England strange things happen. Did not a Colonel sahib enter a door of a great London club, and is it not true that it was known that upon his person were certain sacred jewels from the God? Is it not true that from the moment he entered the building all trace of him was lost?"

Morgan shivered. He knew the story well. The Colonel in question had married a native princess.

He was about to negotiate for the sale of her jewels ; he disappeared and was never seen again. It was an uncanny story. As a boy the princess had taken Morgan for drives in her phaeton in the Park. She had given him sweets on her way to the club. Each evening she drove her husband home to their beautiful house near Richmond.

"Once to bind our love," Motibae went on, "I gave my lord a sacred gift, the jewelled eye of the god Mahadeva. Much value is set upon it. Cursetjee, my father's treasurer, has discovered that the jewel is in your possession." And Motibae told Morgan the story which she had confided to Jestyn.

"I keep the jewel locked up in my safe. I will return it to you, and you shall take it back to Handinugger."

Motibae did not reply immediately. She met his stern expression with troubled eyes. Morgan saw her lips quiver. All around them pulsated the glory of life, the charm of a perfect room, and the perfume from a great vase of carnations . . . and the ashes of a dead passion. . . .

"Ah ! jewel of my heart," she cried, "if you send me back to Handinugger, you send me back to certain death !"

Morgan's reply betrayed his uneasiness.

"If you had written, I would have found some means of returning the jewel."

At that moment Motibae and the man she loved appeared to be the only discordant notes in the perfect harmony of their surroundings. Love had placed her on its pitiless rack . . . fear of further separation from this man tormented her like fire.

"Sahib !" she exclaimed bitterly : "For you I have renounced my rank, my caste ; because I feared

for your safety, Cursetjee will betray me to my father.
 . . . Will you force me to tell him what you were
 to me. . . ."

"Surely your fears are exaggerated, Motibae."

"I feigned love for Cursetjee to save my lord," she cried; "and when we reached London, with my maid Badana, I fled. Already have I angered my father, Sivajaro, he summoned me before him and said: 'Prince Padau has heard of your fairness: he has to-day sent me this casket containing his formal offer for your hand. In spite of your high position as my daughter, it is an honour. Padau is a ruling prince. It is a great alliance and exceedingly good for our State.' And I prostrated myself at the feet of my father and I cried: 'I cannot marry him.' Then spoke my father: 'This is no time for personal feelings. If you were allied to such a man as Prince Padau, we could crush our enemies like insects between our two mighty stones of power.' Then I answered, 'I will seek the last journey before I marry Padau!' And then, Beloved, came Cursetjee—and I saw trouble spread like an eagle over the State of Handinugger. Great terror fell upon me, and I smiled into the face of the Fire-worshipper. . . . I saw my lord's friend in Wales, the artist who painted a picture of Motibae; already the wings of death are beating against the doors of his cage . . . he has desecrated the beauty of Sivajaro's daughter."

"You threaten us all with death!"

"Oh, brave and mighty one," she cried. "It is for your safety alone that I fear. In this big city the watch-dog prowls. I prayed to the gods that I might be in time. It is for your sake that I set myself out as a lure to captivate the heart of a Parsee; that I scented my body and put jasmine flowers in

my hair. Will the Keeper of the Pearl not guard her from the wolf of Handinugger? Sooner would I seek peace in the darkest well than give myself in marriage to Prince Padau. Have I not been as a wife to you, my beloved? Whatever happens oh! my Soul. I will guard my honour and die rather than lose you."

Morgan was faced with the biggest problem of his life. Knowing the East as he did, deep in his heart he realised that Motibae had not come on a frivolous mission. She would not marry Padau, or give herself to Cursetjee. . . . She claimed the man who had deserted her. She was obsessed by fear that Mahadeva would bring evil on the man she loved. . . . And Cursetjee? Perhaps for the first time Morgan vaguely realised the value of the glittering bauble Motibae had forced upon him. He knew Cursetjee's type. He would gain possession of the jewel, and then Motibae and Handinugger and the god Mahadeva would know no more of the sacred treasure.

There was only one way out of it. He must temporise with Motibae. In a conciliatory tone he said: "When Cursetjee turns up, in your presence the jewel shall be given back to him. I will hand it to him on the boat on the day he returns to Bombay with you!"

"I will not go," Motibae cried. "Have I not told you . . . I have come to you, Lord of my life."

"At Port Said you will leave the boat," Morgan said quietly. "I will go overland and meet you. You can slip away as you did on arrival in England; and Cursetjee will go on to Bombay, but you will be safe with me."

"Beloved!" Motibae exclaimed passionately, "I will give myself to no one but you. The only Lord who

will take me to his arms if we are parted, will be Death himself."

Morgan tried to reassure her.

"If you do as I ask you, Motibae, when Cursetjee meets you again you will not excite his suspicions. Tell him what I have told you about the jewel."

"I will be brave and fearless," she whispered. "For my sake do not run unnecessary risks."

"I will remember your warning, Motibae. Dry those starry eyes, and look forward to our happy future."

"Let me this night lie within your arms, and to-morrow I will return to the hotel where my maid Badana waits for me."

Her hot breath fanned his cheek, he avoided her red pleading lips.

"Wait until we meet in Port Said, Motibae. My butler knows you are here. We must possess our souls in patience—for your sake there must not be a scandal in this house."

"Promise you will come to my hotel to-morrow."

"I promise," said Morgan.

She threw her arms round his neck and kissed him lingeringly.

"May the gods guard my beloved."

At Morgan's request the butler telephoned for a taxi. Motibae was just entering the car when someone jumped in after her.

"The fowler has snared his bird!"

She looked up into the evil, gloating face of Cursetjee.

CHAPTER XXXIII

A WELSH BEAUTY

DAZED and terrified, Motibae rested her head against the dark cloth lining of the taxi. Cursetjee watched her furtively. Her lips were tremulous, tears trickled slowly down her pale face; the man watching was consumed with bitter jealousy of his rival. . . . Possibly she had already warned Morgan about the jewel. And Morgan would sell it. They would return to Handinugger empty-handed—if he did not act swiftly.

“You have treated me like a dog!” Cursetjee muttered. “You persuaded me to bring you to England, and when we reached London you ran away from me—the man who meant to save you from the anger of the Maharajah. Is it not for your sake that I seek the jewel so that the wrath of Mahadeva shall be appeased. For all this you gave me nothing in return. I restrained my longing, for your promises were as sweet as the fruit which is found in the oasis of an endless desert. You deserted me. You may well cover up your face with your hands, false one! It is well for you that I do not strangle you! And to no purpose I employed taxis, and spent money like water, but Motibae, the daughter of Sivajaro, I found not. To-day in an omnibus I heard two men talking about a great picture . . . the picture of Motibae . . . I found the picture and saw you, shameless

one, in your unveiled beauty for these dogs to gloat upon. I traced the artist . . . I traced the man I sought. To-night he attended a big dinner with the woman he is to marry."

"Why waste your lies upon me?"

The Parsee smiled grimly. He laid his thin brown fingers on Motibae's soft cheek, and a shudder ran through her delicate, responsive body. He could afford to wait.

"I dogged his steps. I saw you enter the house, and later I saw him and the girl he is to marry go into the house you have just left. I became desperate. I intended killing you when you came out . . . I am a ruined man. As I searched London I fell among thieves. Look here," he went on earnestly, "this is all I have left." He showed her a few odd notes and some silver. "You see why I did not kill you," he went on mercilessly. "If I had done so, I had no means to escape."

Motibae was aflame with jealous passion. Now she knew the reason of Morgan's coldness. To-morrow she would find out for herself if Cursetjee's words were true. . . . If they were. . . . Why had Morgan told her to leave the boat at Port Said?

"Trouble not about money, Cursetjee," she said, and she took off two rings from her slim fingers. "Sell them."

Cursetjee knew they were of great value, some of the jewels lavished upon his only child by the Maharajah.

"I have fulfilled my mission, O impatient one. The Sahib will hand me the jewel on the day that you and I return to Handinugger."

"Will you swear that upon Mahadeva?"

"I swear it."

The next morning Princess Motibae received con-

firmation of Cursetjee's story. In an illustrated morning paper that Badana handed to her mistress there was an account of the St. David's Day dinner, and a photograph of Nest was published—beside that of Sir Rhys Morgan ; and underneath the photographs were written the lines that burnt themselves into Motibae's brain.

“ Nest Anwyl, a Welsh beauty, who will shortly become the bride of Sir Rhys Morgan. . . . ”

CHAPTER XXXIV

LILY OF THE VALLEY

MORGAN made a merciless decision, he decided to get Motibae out of the country quickly, before there was time for scandal. He would carry out his programme as arranged with Motibae up to a point, and then, when Cursetjee and she were well on their way back to India, he would send a wireless to the Captain, telling him to let the princess know he was prevented from leaving England, at the last moment. He went out early the next morning to the P. & O. offices to book passages for Bombay.

Soon after Sir Rhys left the cottage, the butler told Nest she was wanted on the telephone. To her surprise she heard a strange voice asking if she was Nest Anwyl.

"Well yes, indeed."

"You are going to marry Sir Rhys Morgan?"

"I am engaged to be married to him," Nest replied.

There was a slight pause, and then the voice continued:

"I want you to keep a secret. I knew your future husband in India. I am the Princess Motibae, and I am very anxious to give you a wedding present."

Nest was all excitement; she found herself saying:

"Oh! I should love to see you. Mister Jestyn is a friend of mine. He painted you!"

Nest heard a musical laugh.

"Can't you come along and see me? I am at the Savoy."

Nest could not resist the adventure; she promised to go straight away. She was a little piqued that Rhys had gone out without saying good morning to her. She found herself turning over the pages of the telephone book. At last the name she sought faced her. She rang up Lord Cadvan.

In a short time she was talking to him. Would he be in that day?

"Why, yes, Nest, if you will come and see me. What about luncheon, one o'clock sharp?"

With a flushed face she put down the receiver. Now to propitiate her father before Rhys returned.

Anwyl was in the music room, listlessly turning over the pages of a morning paper.

"Spring sunshine," she smiled, pointing through the windows.

"Well indeed, what is the good of it here?" he exclaimed contemptuously, throwing the paper aside. "Come here."

She crossed over to her father and she flung her arms around his shoulders. He thought she looked pale and he asked anxiously:

"Are you happy, girl fach?"

"Why yes, of course. What a strange question."

Anwyl sighed; and he stroked her small hand.

"I wondered if you felt like me, Nest. It's very nice to live in a place like this, well ordered and near to the hub of the world, but it doesn't compensate us for the valleys and mountains of old Wales. Think of it, the snowdrops are out and the primroses will be showing soon, and the daffodils in the garden at Nant y Glo."

"Oh, father," she cried wildly; "you will break my heart!"

"Why break your heart," he asked gently, "when I tell you that although I was unhappy at Nant y Glo, it is nothing to the unhappiness I feel now that I am away from the place. If I were a younger man," he said, "I think I'd turn farmer, and with the sweat of my brow I would work until the brown earth yielded up to me the fruits of my labour."

She clung to him piteously.

"If only I were a boy instead of a girl, I'd help to stir up those old barren acres," she cried.

"But you're going to be a grand lady," said Anwyl. "A terrible lot of nonsense you and I talk when we are alone together. Hew and Davy are good boys, but they want a master to work with them, boss them; somebody young! I don't know what life will be like without you, Nest. Morgan won't take you abroad or anything of that sort?"

"I will not leave you," she cried, pressing her face to his. "My heart is in Wales. I cannot bear life out of Wales!" She dashed away from him, so that her tears would not betray her. To Nest, Wales meant Maelgwyn, and all the delights of life.

Fifteen minutes later she returned, ready to go out. "Shopping and all sorts of things," she explained to Anwyl. "When Rhys returns, tell him I may not get back very early, and I have to go to Daran's, about my wedding frock, and sometimes he keeps his customers waiting for ages."

"Mind you don't get run over," said Anwyl. "When Morgan comes in I'll have to tell him I'm getting very lonely. I want to get home. I can't help the longing. . . ."

Oh, day of adventure! Nest was restless and un-

"Well, I shall find Craig Wen," Morgan persisted. He looked disappointed. He could not bear this girl out of his sight. Even Jestyn was no longer amused by his infatuation. It was taking a sinister turn. Not long afterwards the two men were walking along the road to Ugly House. For some time they were silent. Each man perturbed by a different cause, and yet the issue was more or less the same, the happiness of Nest. It was Morgan who at length gave expression to his thoughts.

"I say, old man, what did you mean when you told Nest that her father had very strong reasons for her going to Craig Wen?"

There was a long pause, and at length Morgan received the answer to his question.

"Well, perhaps it's better you should know the truth. Nest has a lover!"



CHAPTER XXII

MID-DAY SUNSHINE

"NEST has a lover!—Nest has a lover," the stars revolved in the sky, the swaying trees became gaunt spectres, the branches grizzly fingers beating time to Jestyn's mocking refrain: "Nest has a lover!"

Then when she talked of love, she knew something about it? Morgan's face became cruel, there is nothing that more quickly awakens savagery in a man than thwarted desire, or, the crashing to earth of the idol he has set up for his own gratification.

"Sorry I had to tell you," said Jestyn, his kindly features showing signs of regret, "but thought it best, man, after the conversation we had before we left home. Anwyl believes that at Craig Wen it will be more difficult for Nest's admirer to see her. I have given my word to Anwyl to do all in my power to stop it. That is why I would not take sides with her about going to Marged's."

"And the man?" There was still a savage ring in the way in which Morgan asked the question. "Farmer, peasant?"

"Well, no indeed, Lord Cadvan's nephew."

There was silence; and at last Morgan said with an effort: "Maelgwyn Cadvan! But, he's more or less mixed up with Lady Morvyth Hervey. They were engaged when she met Hervey, and now Lord Cadvan's pushing it for all he's worth."

"Anwyl tells me that Nest loves him."

"What does she know of love? What can that stripling Maelgwyn Cadvan, tell her of love? Love isn't sugar and water, it is something much stronger. Ugly, brutal, but worth while . . ."

"Then, man bach, if that is your feeling, go in and win," said Jestyn, "but I feel a traitor when I talk this way. I know now why Nest came to me to-night. She wanted me to influence her father, to plead for her youth and for her love for this man whom she nursed day in, day out."

With growing mistrust Morgan heard of the accident and the manner in which the emotion he described as calf love, came to the Valley. But like most men of his calibre, when difficulties rise to stem the tide of their desires, the greater becomes their determination to surmount them.

"I shall get a horse, stable him . . ."

"Oh, you can get a horse easily enough," said Jestyn. "Jones, the farmer, will be glad to earn a pound or two. He has several mares eating their heads off. And if you are going to court Nest at Craig Wen, you'll do better with a gee-gee than with a motor." But the bantering tones gave way to a lament. "It is awkward that Nest wishes me to help her, and Anwyl wishes me to help him! I am very sorry for Nest, but I feel that Anwyl's wishes have a prior claim on my good offices than hers. If I help you to win Nest, I shall have earned poor old Anwyl's eternal gratitude."

"And mine," said Morgan quietly.

* * * * *

When the two men left Nant y Glo, Nest went into the parlour to say good-night to her father. His mood was still sullen, he refused to have the lamp lit. She placed her face against his, for the first time in her

life, she felt his chin, harsh, unshaven, against her fair skin. A simple thing that unshaven chin . . . yet to Nest it was an incident full of pathos. Even cleanliness no longer appealed to her father. Hitherto Anwyl's clothes might have been shabby, but he was always scrupulously clean. He fed carefully. When Betti put her foot down, and insisted on either lighting the lamp or sending for Dr. Howell, she won, but the lamp showed up the new Anwyl! His ruffled, uncombed white hair, his suit, spotted with food, his nails unattended, his hands—Nest shuddered. This new slovenliness hurt her in a way that nothing else could have done.

"Father, I'm sorry," she muttered.

"Go to bed, now, straight away."

With tears streaming from her eyes she passed through the way of the door. When Betti came in Anwyl looked strange, his lips were parted.

"What does it matter now," he muttered wildly. "What does it matter now she's false," he rocked too and fro in his chair.

"Oh! Master bach!" cried Betti, "what indeed has come to you!"

"I have lived all these years without a thought of another woman," he said hoarsely. "My strength has gone. The grave is the only resting place for a broken heart." He sprang up and beat his knuckles upon his breast. Betti tried to restrain him. She struggled with him, her mane of red hair fell down her back, and Hew, passing by the door, heard strange sounds.

"Hello, hello, what is it?"

But great as was Betti's love for Hew, her devotion to her master was greater. Hew's voice sobered Anwyl. He sank down into a chair breathing heavily

and Betti quickly coiled her hair around her head, and boldly she went to the door.

"The master bach has been having a bad attack," she said to Hew. "Go to his room and pour out a dose of the medicine that Howell sent for him."

Hew brought the medicine, and handed it to Betti, as she held the door ajar, and her strong arm encircled the passion-storm-tossed man.

"Drink, little master."

Anwyl did not seem to be conscious of what he did now, and he looked dazed and frightened when Betti whispered in Welsh :

"You must not bring more sorrow to the mistress fach"

Nest had a sleepless night. Unrest like a pestilential disease, creates unrest. In one room we find a calm quiet atmosphere, where thoughts of beauty and security abide with peace and contentment. In another room lurk violent passions. Malice and greed destroy happiness.

The grim spirit of unrest became the inhabitant of Nant y Glo.

Howell on his way to a new case at the other end of the village, called in to see Anwyl. His pulse was rapid, uneven, and the doctor looked grave, and he said to Betti :

"Bit uncertain, isn't he? Must go on with his bromide. Ill mentally and physically, any undue excitement and well, pop goes the weasel, get me? "

Betti nodded :

"He's going away for a few days to Lewis Jestyn."

"Do him all the good in the world. And the little wench, not Lady Cadvan yet, eh? "

"Pity a doctor is not more of a gentleman," was Betti's cross retort.

When he had gone, Hew came in, and his rugged manhood found favour in her eyes.

"Well, well," said Hew, feeling like a young terrier with his tail up, when he saw the marked approval of Betti's expression:

"What about it, girl? Coming to the fair with me?"

"Fair!" Betti retorted with contempt. "A fair lasts for as long as there is money in the pocket, and the lights as long as there is oil in the lamps for the merry-go-rounds."

"Well, yes, that is true," Hew agreed. "But there's a bit of fun between morning and night-time, and still better fun, when the lamps go out, Betti dear."

"Tidy savings I've been putting by all my life," Betti admitted. "I've seen thirty-six."

"Tut, tut, Betti wench, they tell me that Venus is no chicken, but she's still very popular with sculptors and the poets. You will never grow older than Venus to me," and Hew twirled his cap in his hand. "I'm thinking the master's illness is getting a bit too much for you. What say you?"

"To a wedding on the quiet," she dimpled. "Not a soul to know?"

"Well, well, the Singing Meeting would give us a copper kettle for sure, if we went to Moriah Chapel."

"It would mean a new coat and skirt from Bethesda for me," said Betti, "but now I've accepted you for certain, Hew, I'm not sure whether I'll not let that coat and skirt wait for next spring."

"Not you, my girl, you will look fine in a navy blue, and I'll keep my eyes open for a nice little farm, eh, Betti? You're champion at butter making."

"Stop talking about such nonsense," Betti cried, her face as red as a poppy. All her life she had been secretly longing for a little place of her own, and here

was Hew, her man, holding out temptation. "I will not marry you after all," she cried. "What sort of girl should I be if I deserted the old ship when the captain is sick unto death?"

"Well, well," Hew answered crestfallen, "if you want to wear the trousers bach, let me know."

"Ah, now, don't be cross, little sweetheart," she cooed, "run into Bethesda, see the registrar, and we'll slip out early one morning and tie the knot."

"Champion, champion," cried Hew. "I'll get my best boots soled to-day."

Nest waited at Trifaen. She chose the spot where she had first met Maelgwyn, because it was a sort of half-way house, a convenient place for him to shelter his car, a spot where they could talk without fear of being disturbed. She climbed up the slope and looked down the pass. The scene was full of beauty. A land of enchantment, where sorrow takes wings. In the solitudes of the mountains, the petty cares of life fade away. The mighty rocks, the everlasting hills bear eloquent testimony as to the futility of earthly gain and ambitions. Their serene heights mock our foolish worries, our smallness is pressed home to us. We hear a warning, as we gaze at the majestic sentinels, piercing the Heavens, clothed in the colours of the sun, wearing the immortal veil of mystery. "For a thousand years have we not looked down upon the turmoil that persecutes the soul of man?—Yet we remain. Where will you be in a hundred years? What better will the world be for your laughter, your tears? Love's poor little butterfly! Is it a great tragedy if your wings are scorched to-day?"

For half-an-hour Nest waited; she strained her ears for the sound of Maelgwyn's car, gazing into the deep blue beyond the pass, where there was sea, and

the peaceful Straits. But the only sounds were the liquid notes of a bird, and the weird music of the wind whistling through the rushes, that tufted the bog. She shivered, "Just as if someone was walking over my grave," as Betti would say. She tried to dissipate her fears that Maelgwyn would not come, by breaking into song, old Welsh songs that have brought cheer in their time to many a home-sick wanderer from his native land. Songs that have fired the ardour of lovers. Songs that have become lullabys, when to their sweet refrain a little Welsh mother has cooed her baba to sleep against her bosom. . . . And yet Maelgwyn came not ! Nest tried to keep the tears out of her eyes. It was difficult, the song of love died on her lips. . . . She stood up an entrancingly beautiful figure, and her pride began to take shape, and she flushed and said to herself :

"I will not stop, if he doesn't want me, I don't want him," but although one side of her nature was urging this fact upon her, the other side was contradicting vehemently. "It isn't true, I love him, I love him." This was not the milk and sugar love that Morgan had disparaged. This was the real love that could crucify and torture, that meant if the need be, all giving and no receiving. This was the love that makes a mock of pride, that is trampled and besmirched, but which rises like a white rose, out of the soil which suckled its roots and gave forth the strength from whence it springs. Her head dropped upon her breast. She turned her face homewards. She came to the pass. Suddenly the loud toot-toot of a car reached her ears. She turned. Maelgwyn had come ! He had **not** failed ! Tears had brought a brighter light to her eyes, adding softness and sweetness like crystal dew drops jewelling the petals of a rose.

She had never seen him in hunting togs before, in a silk hat, and a "pink" coat with crested buttons, the full rigout of the Cadvan Hunt. He wore fawn breeches and top boots, turned over beneath the knee with buff kid.

"You put me in a devil of a hole," he exclaimed, "by sending that telegram. I was actually at the meet at the Bulkeley Arms, Beaumaris, when it reached me. They were throwing hot pennies to the kids, hot coppers, a relic of the old custom. A servant dashed over from Cadvan . . . we were just off. Well, I had to make excuses. But it is awkward. Pity you did it, my uncle will be venemous. I was more or less playing host for him to-day."

Nest could not speak. Whilst she had been longing for him so desperately, he had been off to a meet, to make one of the gay cavalcade of brave horsemen, who, with a pack of hounds at their heels, follow a foam-flecked, terror-stricken fox to its death!

"I'll run the old bus against the wall," said Maelgwyn, hardly noticing that Nest had not answered him. He took off his hat, put it in the car, and drew on a Burberry. "Not quite the sort of togs one goes mountain climbing in, eh, my dear?"

He jumped out of the car, and bent down and kissed her on the lips. "Well, Miss Sobersides, why so pensive and with never a word to say to a chap? It wasn't my fault I was late, I have told you the circumstances."

"You have indeed," Nest retorted, with a trace of petulance. She was still suffering from those thoughtless stinging words: "You put me in a devil of a hole. Why did you do it?"

"It was difficult for me," Maelgwyn went on trying to excuse himself for his hasty remarks on arrival,

"because my uncle asked me only last night if I had anything on to-day. I hadn't. He wishes me to escort some of our party to the Beaumaris Meet."

Nest fought with herself against putting the question that would force itself upon her even against her own better judgment.

"Lady Morvyth Hervey?"

"The others backed out at the last moment. Sir Rhys Morgan decided to go off to his old friend, Lewis Jestyn, and Miss Pryse started a cold."

Nest flushed.

"If I had known that I was going to spoil a day's hunting for you and your old sweetheart, I would not have troubled you."

Nest in anger had all the wild ungoverned impulses of the true Celt. She lost her sense of proportion, she became her own enemy in her passionate self revelation. Deliberately she placed herself in the least favourable position. She became a reckless gambler, risking her own happiness, daring indiscretion. She heard Maelgwyn's pleadings, urging her to control herself, but all the repressed agony of those previous hours, now culminated in this prodigious waste of physical energy.

"Nest, Nest!" Maelgwyn protested, "you will make yourself ill. Jealousy is like poison in the cup of love."

"Jealous," she cried, "I'm not jealous. Why should I be jealous of a scheming widow. My life is before me, half of hers behind her. You or any other man are welcome to her. I don't want you. I hate you!"

Maelgwyn endeavoured to put his arms round her, and he forced her head upwards so that he could gaze down into her quivering features.

"It is not true," Maelgwyn protested, "you love me, even this anger proves it."

She met his earnest compelling gaze ; she nestled in his arms, and sobbing quietly she confessed :

“ I’m sorry that I spoilt your day, but I wanted you.”

“ That’s all right,” he answered quickly. “ What does it matter after all if I leave Morvyth in the lurch twenty times. I long to make you happy, Nest. Whenever you want me I am prepared to chuck everything,” and so he soothed and comforted her. And Nest confided her reason for sending him the telegram.

“ It was so difficult to write and explain. Father is ill, we must humour him, everybody tells me so. That is why I must go to Craig Wen to-morrow. Now you understand why I sent for you,” she added with a tremulous smile. “ You would have come here and waited for me in vain.”

“ That’s all right. As things have turned out I am jolly glad that I’m here, but don’t fret about Craig Wen. I’ll soon find it.”

Nest shook her head dolefully.

“ Not with your car,” she declared.

“ I can leave it somewhere, and walk the rest of the way.”

She was happy again. The terrible fear that everybody was trying to part her from Maelgwyn was fading away into the remote distance. When he was with her, so passionate, so loving, so anxious to do all in his power to allay her fears, she chid herself for her follies. They made plans once more. Every day at three o’clock, while Nest was at Craig Wen, she would walk down the Roman road, until she reached the bridge that was built by the ancient invaders of the Cymry, and there she would wait for half-an-hour.

“ But not on Thursday,” said Nest, “ for on that day I must go to the horse jumping.”

It was dusk when they parted, dusk, but in Nest’s heart there was the glow of mid-day sunshine.

CHAPTER XXIII

POISON IN THE CUP

WHEN Lord Cadvan arranged that Maelgwyn was to represent him at the Beaumaris Meet, he felt that he had achieved a moral victory over his head-strong nephew. In spite of his years Cadvan was a hard rider to hounds and he had as fine a seat in the saddle as any man in the county. In his younger days when he was in the 60th Rifles, at the regimental point-to-point races, he had ridden his horse to glorious victory time and again. He was as all sportsmen agreed, "hard as nails," therefore those of his acquaintances, who did not know the subtle working of his crafty mind, were a little surprised that he did not accompany Maelgwyn and the beautiful Lady Morvyth Hervey . . .

Cadvan relied on his knowledge of the hunting field. There are possibilities of flirtations, when the long day with the hounds is over, and the huntsmen and the pack has gone back to the kennels, and the last sandwich has been eaten, and the flask drained. The followers become stragglers in twos and threes, that is if their horses are not handed over to grooms, and motors used for a speedy return home. Cadvan knew that a woman with a passable figure looks her best when mounted on a thoroughbred, who strains at the bit and paws the earth to get away at the first sound of "Tally ho!" Cadvan knew the fascination of a "pink" coat on a handsome well-set-up man to a woman. He

chuckled at the thoughts of Morvyth and Maelgwyn, walking their horses back to Cadvan in the twilight. Morvyth with her sensuous dreamy smiles, and her knowledge of men. . . . Maelgwyn ambitious, greedy for a career . . . sunset, and the gleaming restless grey red waters of the Straits at eventide. . . .

If he could bring off his schemes, it was worth giving up a day with the hounds. Cadvan strode up and down his library, sometimes he gazed restlessly out of the mullioned windows, and the frown gathered between his overhanging brows :

“ Nest shall come to me.”

The obsession became a dominating force. She should become the solace of his old age, the delight of his declining years. Myfanwy had thwarted him, she had failed in her obligations. He would seek a means of protecting himself against that grim spectre, loneliness, that is so frequently the ghostly companion of the aged. If a man waited long enough, any woman could be bought ! Cynical, disappointed, he was determined to grasp all the pleasure he could out of life during the remaining years of his existence. He was glad that he had met that curious woman, Marged. He had thrown a clever trail across her path with his subtle hint about an old harp. If only he could get possession of the harp which Nest prized so much. It would be like a magnet to the highly-strung temperamental girl. And Anwyl ? Cadvan shrugged his shoulders contemptuously, he was a cumberer of the earth, who dreamt and slept and desolated his own existence, with his vain repinings. And yet : “ Perhaps after all, I am luckier than he ? ” he decided, relapsing into his philosophical way of reviewing his misfortunes. “ Perhaps after

all his loss is greater than mine, he knew Myfanwy as I never knew her ! ”

He strode over to the window and gazed restlessly across the sunlit lawns. “ Lucky devil,” he muttered aloud, thinking of his nephew following hounds on such a crisp exhilarating day. A lonely luncheon and boredom lay before him. Suddenly he uttered an exclamation of surprise. Turning off from the drive there was a short cut to the stables, and Cadvan saw a groom riding “ White Star ” along this path, the mount that Maelgwyn had chosen for his day’s hunting.

He hastened out and made his way quickly to the stables.

“ Where’s your master ? Anything wrong ? ”

“ Captain Cadvan is all right, my lord. But soon after he had started off with her ladyship this morning, I was following on in his car, when a telegraph boy asked me if the Captain was ahead, and he handed me a telegram for him ; I gave it to him when I reached Beaumaris. The Captain went off in his car, and told me to walk ‘ White Star ’ home.”

“ Pleasant,” Cadvan ejaculated below his breath, having a fairly good idea from whence came the urgent message. “ And her ladyship ? ”

The groom hesitated.

“ Upset, eh ? ”

“ Well, my lord, her ladyship was angry. Said she wouldn’t ride without an escort, and then the Captain spotted the doctor who attended him when he was ill. He came to the stables to see the horses, you know, my lord, when the Captain was on the mend. So her ladyship followed with Dr. Howell.”

“ Bounder,” Cadvan snapped. “ Are they likely to draw cover this way ? Any chance of my catching them up ? ”

"Bit late," the groom was forced to admit reluctantly, for Cadvan's expression was not too pleasant.

"Confound the fellow!" he was thinking. "Not only does he spoil a good day's sport for me, but he treats Morvyth Hervey as if she is a kitchen wench, or God knows what! So much for the chivalry of the young bloods of to-day. When I was a young man, I'd have found a way out before I'd have left one pretty woman in the lurch, to find myself at the beck and call of another one—unless she were a better-looking girl," his hard features relaxed into his usual sardonic grin, Nest was a better-looking girl—all the same he decided that he must have things out with Maelgwyn. He must be brought to book, to be shown on which side his bread was buttered.

When Lady Morvyth arrived home, she made straight for her room. She threw her felt bowler hat on to a brocade-covered lounge chair. Her maid helped her out of her riding habit, and prepared a bath with her mistress's favourite Eastern perfumed salts. Lady Morvyth's discontented features were creamed and massaged, and her hair brushed, before she faced her mirror, with that secret fear that comes to a woman when she has nothing more satisfying to offer a man than her physical charms. But with all her beauty she lacked something, that insidious little magnet, sex appeal, which is the basis of all enduring unions between man and woman.

Morvyth meant to win! She had been barely civil to Dr. Howell. His suave manner and deferential air disgusted her, and made her all the more furious with Maelgwyn, and yet his very indifference fanned the flame of her desire for him. When a man treats a woman badly, she often regards him with greater

favour than the man who is her slave. She dressed with care, choosing a white georgette frock, embroidered with minute crystal beads, which gave a certain shimmering gleam, without defining a definite bead design upon its filmy background. An exotic touch was added when Lady Morvyth fastened a vivid petunia shaded orchid, with a diamond and pink topaz brooch upon the top of her left shoulder strap. There was a dinner party at Cadvan that night, a Bishop and his wife, both keen archæologists who had come to Anglesea to visit an isolated hill called Bwrdd Arthur, or Arthur's Round Table, and the remains of an ancient fortification. The Vicar of Cadvan and his daughter and some county people made up what Lady Morvyth considered 'a dull party.' Nell Pryse came along, in severely cut black velvet, her monocle firmly fixed into her left eye, and smoking a cigarette in a long ivory and gold mouthpiece.

"If so dull a party," she asked Lady Morvyth with affected innocence, "why this alluring costume?"

"Cat!"

Nell laughed and shrugged her pretty shoulders.

"Anyway, did you have good sport?"

"Rotten."

"Ah, ah, so things did not go well with you and Maelgwyn!" No woman likes another woman to know that she has not been successful in handling a difficult lover. It is the first acknowledgment of loss of power. A woman is only sympathetic to a woman, when she is convinced that the object of her commiseration is a failure!

"Maelgwyn and I understand each other perfectly," was Morvyth's quiet reply. She flashed a glance at herself in a neighbouring mirror when she was speaking, and she was satisfied that there was nothing that nature

or art could confer to make the picture more attractive. Albeit the stinging bitter fact remained, that no power could put the clock back to that hour when Maelgwyn had knelt at her feet with his passionate cry : " Don't throw me over for this man. . . . You don't love him. It's only his money you want, but I can give you love . . . happiness ! "

Remembrance is a bitter friend when ambition has destroyed romance, and all that is left of the past is the gnawing hunger for what might have been . . .

Lord Cadvan and his guests were in the drawing-room when the two women entered. He had made a request to Maelgwyn :

" Come into my library before you go to bed to-night," and for a moment, Maelgwyn felt like a boy with a prospective thrashing hanging over him, after indulging in an injudicious escapade. Under cover of the buzz of conversation at dinner, Maelgwyn sought to make some sort of apology to Morvyth, he had expected coldness from her, for she had proved on more than one occasion, that it was just as easy for her to become a woman of ice, as a woman of fire.—To-night, she held herself in hand with consummate skill, she was all geniality and friendliness. So successful was her manner, that before returning to the drawing-room, Maelgwyn had quite decided that :

" Morvyth's a damned good sort. Tremendously improved. Much more feminine than she used to be, more sympathetic too : " Thus he reasoned to Lady Morvyth's advantage.

Lord Cadvan was a perfect host. The Bishop, a good listener to his stories. They discussed the position of the Church in Wales, archæology, golf and the fluctuating fortunes of the Conservative party. Music followed and Morvyth's caressing voice charmed

Cadvan's guests with languorous songs of the East. She was magnetic to-night, on her mettle, she was more than all in love. But the true emotion of love is only perfect when its physical allurements are as satisfying as its mental charm.

At last the guests departed, Morvyth dallied beneath the shaded lights until Maelgwyn wished her good-night !

"I'll make up for my bad behaviour to-day," he told her, "at the very first opportunity."

Lady Morvyth called out to her cousin, "Maelgwyn is in a ripping mood to-night, he'll do anything for us."

"Then take us to Llandair, I'm crazy to see a real typical country crowd," was the brisk reply.

"Certainly, if you wish it. Let me know all about it in the morning and I will not fail to turn up trumps."

Cadvan was huddled up in a leather chair before an enormous fire that burned briskly on the wide open fireplace. He was smoking a cigar, at his side there was a table of ebony and mother of pearl, with a syphon of soda water and a decanter of whisky, and glasses.

When the door opened he did not trouble to turn his head. He just said :

"Have a whisky and soda ?"

Maelgwyn broke the ice.

"You have something to say to me, sir ?"

"I do not wish to pry too deeply into your affairs, but whatever our faults may be, there is one thing in which we have never failed, and that is in chivalry to women."

"I know, I understand," Maelgwyn interposed hastily, "you are naturally annoyed because I left . . ."

"Lady Morvyth Hervey in charge of an outsider like Howell. Had I not known that you were hunting

to day, I should most certainly have accompanied her. As I have said before, Maelgwyn, the Cadvans have been known for their chivalry to women, from the day that our ancestor lost his life in defence of his Queen."

"I have only one excuse. Nest wanted me, sir. A telegram that should in the ordinary course have reached me before I started, was delivered to me after I left."

"So Nest wanted you?"

"She did."

"And because Nest wanted you, you treat Morvyth Hervey like——"

"I have apologised to Morvyth, that apology has been accepted. For some reason or other, you are antagonistic with regard to my love for Nest. But there is nothing I will not do for her—nothing."

"That means you are prepared to share poverty with her."

"That is a hard question, sir. In a year or so my career will be on a more secure basis. I can get an adjutancy to a Territorial Depot, or something of that sort."

"I see," said Cadvan drily, "you want love and a career."

"I want to give the future Lady Cadvan the position to which she is entitled."

The reply, quiet, courteous, stung Cadvan to fury.

"If you persist in your idea of marrying Nest Anwyl, you will take her to poverty, I shall stop your allowance, and although Castell Cadvan must follow the title, the money can be willed as I direct, but it will not be left to you."

Maelgwyn was very pale.

"You couldn't treat me so badly, sir," he remonstrated passionately. "It wouldn't be human. All

my life you've treated me as a son. Educated me, sent me to Sandhurst, given me £500 a year . . . you couldn't do it ! ”

“ Try me ! ” was the cynical retort.

“ But Nest loves me. It would break her heart, and you loved her mother ! ”

“ And for that reason,” said Cadvan mercilessly, “ I am going to do all in my power to prevent her marrying you.”

“ She is so sweet, adorable ! ”

“ You cannot tell me what I do not know about Nest. If I could, I would win her, I would cut you out, she should be mistress here, and her child . . . my heir.”

Maelgwyn covered his face with his hands. The revelation was awful to him. The frenzied determination of Cadvan's voice, like doom—a vast impregnable wall seemed to be rising out of a chasm, to part them, to part Maelgwyn from his true love. Jealousy, an old man's jealousy, was the barrier, the terrible cruelty of it chilled his blood, frightened him with its unrelenting bitterness.

“ You love her too ! ” the man's cry was a sob, his suffering was the caviare to Cadvan's feast of cruelty.

“ Yes,” he said firmly. “ I love Nest, but not with the passion that I gave to her mother, but I love her.”

“ Then why bring unhappiness to her ? ”

“ You have a fine conceit,” sneered Cadvan. “ You say Nest would break her heart if she did not marry you. I don't believe it. Nest does not know life. She lives in a land of dreams. You were the first man of your class to cross her path. In the world, there are many men who will love Nest Anwyl, and they will love her no less as my heiress.”

“ I don't follow you, sir.”

"Because I am old, embittered," Cadvan retorted, "you think that romance is dead in me, but it is not so! I have found a wild flower growing in a sheltered valley. What does Nest know of poverty? Up to now her requirements have been few, she has not known luxury. All her friends have been simple folk. The fruits of the earth, milk, eggs, an occasional joint, suffice them with a few pounds a year to spend upon clothes. You have known the other world, where a few hundreds a year, great riches to Nest and her kind, mean poverty to you. If you marry Nest, you will take her away from her valley, where to? You cannot remain in the Army, for the simple reason you'd be as poor as rats. Very well, you will resign the Army. Look at the state of unemployment to-day amongst your own class? You will be taking Nest to starvation."

"That isn't true," Maelgwyn cried passionately. "She will wait for me. I will resign my commission. I'll try and get something in London, and if that fails I'll get a job abroad. A man I know has just gone out to the West Indies, he couldn't get anything here."

"You'll ruin her life," said Cadvan. "She must either remain a wild flower, or be transplanted to a garden that is warm and sheltered. Leave her alone. I will increase your allowance to £2,000 a year, that sum shall be settled upon you and your heirs. Marry a woman who is devoted to you . . ."

"I will not be bribed to give up Nest!"

"Selfish man!"

The contempt of his voice, stung Maelgwyn, his sensitive features quivered.

"Selfish to give her all I have, body, soul and spirit?"

"If you marry her, you will destroy her. The day

will come when she will hate you, if you cross my path now."

"I can only ruin Nest by deserting her."

"On the contrary," said Cadvan, "the day you marry Morvyth Hervey, Nest Anwyl becomes my heiress, one of the wealthiest women in the land. Marry her, and all that wealth will be left to charities."

"It's vile, it's cruel."

"It's my determination," said Cadvan, "and if your love is as great as you say, you will sacrifice yourself for Nest. Not by dragging her into the mud of poverty, but by renouncing her, so that I may make her the finest, the richest, the most enviable woman that Wales has ever known."

"But I love Nest. I want her."

"Very well," sneered Cadvan, "ruin her!"

CHAPTER XXIV

"YOU ARE KIND TO ME"

A MAN does not deliberately set out to destroy the woman he loves. Strong human emotions may have a perilous habit of swinging the pendulum to a dangerous angle, but more frequently than not man's protective instinct is a woman's salvation! There was so much that was true in Cadvan's terse argument . . . a relentless Nemesis in his decision to make Nest his heiress. She was to pay the debt her mother had left unpaid. Maelgwyn paced restlessly up and down the room for hours. Cadvan had said that on the soil poverty was not such a sordid evil because it gave certain benefits that would not exist in a town. This fact was indisputable. Tillers of the soil enjoy certain benefits by their rural life, unattainable by the town dweller. Limited means in the country do not bring into life the degrading poverty of a city.

A little white cottage and rural pursuits are further away from a "doss house" than a struggle against fate in the market place. Maelgwyn studied his position from every point of view. Should he try his hand at farming? But he had no capital! More than once he had been told that the only way to make a farm pay was to have capital behind it. The only chance of eking out anything beyond a pittance was to farm on a large scale, and that meant a big outlay; . . . perhaps no profits for several years. Besides

what could a Sandhurst-bred soldier know of agricultural pursuits ! He might cut a little ice as secretary of a golf club, or a social club, he might by a lucky fluke get a private secretaryship, but all woefully "risky" without private means to back up these much sought-after sugar plums.

And if he failed to get anything ? He would take Nest from a life of comparative happiness to a grim relentless fight against uneven odds. It was dawn before he fell asleep, and even then the haunting dread of those bitter words—"You will ruin her," gave him no sense of rest. . . .

* * * * *

On the appointed day Marged's cart drew up at Nant y Glo. The harp, covered with its silk shawl, was securely fastened to the back of the seat with a rope. Jestyn and Sir Rhys Morgan had come along to see Nest off. They had discussed Anwyl's attitude of mind and then Jestyn remarked after breakfast :

"Anyway I won't leave Anwyl alone, after Nest has gone. I'll go and fetch him. Still keen, man bach ?" he asked Morgan when he showed a desire to accompany him.

"That is an inadequate word to express my feelings for Nest Anwyl," was Morgan's quick, but determined reply.

But Nest was blind to his admiration. She was unhappy that her father would not listen to her pleadings with regard to the harp. She hated going to Craig Wen, there was even a restrained aloofness in her manner to Betti who was suffering from a troubled conscience. To-day her name and Hew's were to be seen in the registrar's office.

Anwyl came to the bridge a forlorn, unkempt figure, and sudden, overwhelming pity filled Nest's heart.

To herself she murmured: “If he frets like this, his days are numbered. I must be patient. . . . I must not add suffering to his lot.” She flung her arms impulsively around his bent shoulders and kissed him passionately.

“Father bach,” she cried. “I will be true to you. I will indeed. Get well quickly, and you and I will be happy, as happy as the birds in the trees.”

His features quivered. He put his hands upon her shoulders.

“Pet lamb,” he cried harshly, “see to it that you fail me not!”

Rhys Morgan helped Nest into the cart. She was not conscious of his burning admiring glance, when she said dully: “You are kind to me, thank you very much.”

She sat on the front seat beside Jossi, Marged’s farm boy, and before they turned the corner where a buttress of rock casts a shadow across the road, she looked back. Jestyn and her father had gone, but Morgan was still there, he waved his hand. He watched the cart, until it was out of sight. . . .

It was a long drive to Craig Wen. Jossi, who liked to gossip, found Nest uncommunicative. She answered him listlessly. . . . She would pray that light would come to her father, that the hardness would leave his heart. How many times had she not listened to the reasoning of the preacher: “Whatsoever ye ask in prayer believing that ye shall receive.” Was her faith in prayer wavering, as it had done in love! The morning was clear and bright, shepherds with their dogs at their heels called out “Good day.”

“They’ll all be at the horse jumping to-morrow,” Jossi informed her. “Miss Marged is sending Fan to the sheep dog trials with me. I sent her up after some

sheep near the Devil's Pots last night, and she was splendid. The prize money is mine, if Fan wins. I want it badly too, to buy a concertina, my old one is smashed."

Thus Nest's companion chattered on. They reached the Roman Bridge, arched across a fussy stream, that leaps and sprays over green, moss-patterned brown rocks, on its way down from the hills. The horse began to ascend the steep Roman road that led to the mountain. It was like a long paved causeway, a steep incline between tall hedges, and in the meadows below there was the music of rushing water. In some parts the road became little more than a pathway, but here and there it was wide and swelling, and paved with flagstones. Grass and small rock plants flourished in soil between the stones. Marged's house was built near an old Roman station, and in her day she had picked up more than one coin bearing the imprint of a dead and past Cæsar. Craig Wen was a long low building, with small windows and a sloping roof, it dominated a sweeping chain of mountains. Beyond stretched the fertile vales of several counties.

Nest was glad to get down from the cart. She was sick of Jossi's conversation, sick of everything and woefully depressed. She was banished out of the world. What a place for Maelgwyn to find! It was not so much its distance from Cadvan that worried her, as its inaccessibility.

"Father has sent me to prison, that is what he has done," she decided bitterly to herself.

She walked up the steep rocky path to the house, and knocked on the door. Hearing a sharp "Come in" from Marged, she entered:

"The harp, the harp, have you got the harp?"

Nest nodded impatiently. Marged was a grotesque

figure. Her blue and white skirt coiled up around her waist betrayed a scarlet petticoat. A plaid shawl was arranged like a fichu around her shoulders and fastened with a heavy gold brooch. A handkerchief, placed in a triangle over her head, was tied in a coquettish bow beneath her chin; but all these things were unnoticed by Nest. Her attention was riveted upon an old man who was rubbing his long aristocratic hands together, as he bent over the genial glow of Marged's fire.

“Well, well indeed to goodness, my lord, I told you it would be all right,” Marged was saying. “You here, the harp is here, also my niece, Nest Anwyl. She will play fine tunes for you. She has won many prizes at Eisteddfodau. If she were trained, all the adjudicators say she would be a champion harpist. Nest, drop a curtsey now to his lordship. This is Lord Cadvan.”

But to Marged's astonishment Nest did not obey her. She drew herself up with a contemptuous glance at Lord Cadvan and asked: “Why have you come here?”

Marged flushed angrily.

“None of your saucy tongue, wench, speaking to the big man in that fashion!” and in an aside she added, “He's come about a deal with the harp, why indeed, do you want to put him off?”

Cadvan heard Marged's remark, and amused by the humour of the situation he said:

“Nest and I understand one another perfectly. We are old friends.”

Marged gave a snort of astonishment. When she had talked of Lord Cadvan to Nest on her visit to Nant y Glo, the girl had given no indication that she knew the big man!

“Sly little weasel,” she thought. “Still waters run deeper than the coal mines in the Rhondda!”

Jossi brought the harp and set it in the centre of the kitchen. Marged had no parlour in which to entertain her distinguished guest. The parlour which is the pride of many a Welsh farmhouse, with its elegant Bible, framed pictures of noted Welsh divines, prize cattle and successful choirs, was missing from Marged's abode. The room usually relegated to such a purpose, was like a joiner's workshop, where Marged made her harps, and mended fishing rods. In the corner was a bellows and an anvil, Marged was as handy at shoeing a horse, as in curing a ham, or baiting her rod for salmon fishing.

Cadvan got up from his chair and stood before the harp. In spite of herself Nest watched him eagerly. The harshness left his features, with reverent hands he took the faded silk paisley shawl from around the instrument. Marged hurried out into the yard to give an order to Jossi. The manner in which Cadvan touched the soft covering, instinctively conveyed the impression to Nest that he remembered her mother wearing that shawl. He met Nest's glance, and answered her silent question.

"One night at the Castell, Myfanwy rushed into the grounds to see the moonlight on the lake. She wore a white muslin gown, and a sash the colour of forget-me-nots. There was a wreath of those flowers upon her hair. I thought: 'she'll catch cold--Myfanwy!'" Lord Cadvan's fingers clutched the shawl, he bent over it, his features working pitifully. He pressed the faded silk hungrily to his lips. Nest was fascinated by his actions. A great truth was revealed to her. True love is eternal, it is always fair—decked in muslin—crowned with forget-me-nots. It is only false love that dies. . . . It seemed ages before he recovered himself and said: "Her name, it is inlaid in silver . . ."

"Why yes, there it is," Nest pointed to the lettering on the harp. "You know a lot about the harp?" she ended wonderingly.

"Seeing that it was a gift from me to Myfanwy, is that so strange?"

"Oh! dear, I did not know that. Why did you not tell me?"

"Must I uncover all my wounds to you?"

"I'm sorry," Nest was abashed. Without another word, she took off her hat and cloak, and drawing one of Marged's three legged stools up before the instrument she tuned it, and she sang one of her favourite Welsh ballads.

After a silence Cadvan said:

"I did not know you had a voice, such a wonderful voice. It must be trained. You shall go to Italy. It is the Italian system so I am told, that is ideal for the Welsh voice."

Nest caught his hand within her own. He felt her trembling with eagerness as her words throbbed out into the quiet kitchen in the hills:

"Do you remember your promise. If I brought my mother's harp and sang to you, you would feel like Herod, willing to offer anything, up to a share of your kingdom. Well, I don't want Castell Cadvan," she laughed tremulously, "but I want something else very much indeed; your consent to my marriage with Maelgwyn."

He studied her for a few seconds before replying. Her voice, her abandon, her love for his heir hurt him. She had cast a greater spell over him than he cared to admit—a dangerous spell. He forced his lips to smile, although his heart ached.

"You are a siren!"

"Will you not say I can marry Maelgwyn?"

At that critical moment Marged came in :

" Well, well, what about the harp ? "

" I will give you a cheque for £300 for it."

The old Cadvan had returned, his features assumed their cynical expression. " I'm not offering you too much, I know what it cost."

" Well, well, what do you think of that now for a man, generous you are," cried Marged, a trifle suspiciously. " Perhaps it would have been better if we had had a little more bargaining about it ! What say you, Nest ? Half will go to your father. That's only £150, after all the trouble."

" If you are not satisfied with my offer," Cadvan interposed, " I will get an expert to value the harp. I will give you an undertaking that if he values it at a higher sum than I have paid for it, I will send the difference to you straight away."

" Fair words," Marged admitted, " but I have to make some arrangement about a harp for Nest. The one over there."

" I see, I'm quite prepared that if this harp becomes mine, that Nest shall have the one you made. I will write out a cheque first."

" I don't want Marged's harp," Nest said impatiently. " I only want you to fulfil your promise to me."

Cadvan looked moodily down upon the ground before replying, and then he said to Marged :

" I want to have a talk with Nest. We have an old account to settle."

" If you are trying to get rid of me out of my own kitchen say so."

" Only for a little while, Auntie Marged."

Feeling herself to be a woman of some importance now that she had been offered such a large sum for the harp, Marged said patronisingly :

“Far be it from Marged Anwyl to wish to pry upon any affairs that are not her own,” and with that remark she left them.

“You will not break your promise?”

Cadvan looked down upon Nest’s pleading features.

“If you remember,” he said quietly, “I made a little clause in my promise to the effect that Maelgwyn must desire to marry you.”

“But he does!”

“When did he tell you so?”

“Oh, not in so many words, but yesterday.”

“But yesterday is yesterday,” Cadvan retorted crisply. “To-day is to-day.”

“Well indeed to goodness, are you trying to tell me that Maelgwyn has changed in twenty-four hours? It is untrue.”

“I did not say that Maelgwyn has changed, but facts.”

“Oh, I understand,” cried Nest. “You are going to break your promise to me.”

“You are so dear to me,” said Cadvan earnestly “that I am going to make you my heiress. There is no earthly reparation that I will not make to your father, if he will fall in with my whims.”

“Money is useless to my father.”

“I am not thinking of money,” was Cadvan’s agitated answer. “I could give him something far more precious than money. As easily as I destroyed him, so I could uplift him.”

“That is impossible. There was only one thing that my father valued, the memory of my mother’s love. You robbed him of that!”

“Suppose if I could give it back to him?”

“If you could, would I not bless you with my last breath? But that is impossible. I read the letter.”

"All things are possible to Cadvan's heiress."

"Maelgwyn is your heir. I don't want his birth-right."

Cadvan disregarded her protest.

"I am going to have some fun out of life before I die," he said. "I want you at the Castell, not as another man's wife, but belonging solely to me. I have told all this to Maelgwyn."

"Oh, why distress him?"

Lord Cadvan shrugged his shoulders and he answered: "Maelgwyn is entirely dependent upon me. If he marries you he will be a pauper, marrying a pauper." Cadvan went on to explain that his wealth would be left to charities if Maelgwyn went against him and that if he married the woman chosen for him, an ample provision would be made for his future. "I hope you quite understand the position now, Nest. You will ruin Maelgwyn on the day you marry him. He cannot keep himself—or a wife."

"You are cruel," she sobbed. "I won't give him up. I won't!"

"Very well," Cadvan answered, and he repeated almost exactly the same words that he had used to his nephew. "Very well, ruin him!"

"Oh, God! Oh, God!" Nest moaned, "what indeed to goodness shall I do? I love him so much, he is so fine, so splendid, dearer than life to me!"

"True love means self-sacrifice," said Cadvan.

"True love!" Nest's little hands were clenched as if she were in pain. She walked blindly up the staircase, pushing open a door, she threw herself upon a bed and sobbed as if her heart would break.

CHAPTER XXV

HURT BY LOVE !

AN hour later Marged stood by Nest's bed.

" Lord Cadvan has taken the harp. Pity you were not straight with me, I did not know it was his nephew who was your lover. Your mother made a mess of her life by marrying below her, don't make a mess of yours by seeking a sweetheart above you ! "

" My mother was of his class," cried Nest.

" Married to a peasant," sneered Marged, with the old bitter hostility surging over her against the woman who had come between her and her first love. " And a woman takes the position of the man she marries, and a child her father's position."

" I wish I was dead ! "

" Tut, tut, girl. A pretty girl has plenty of chances. To-morrow you will have many admirers. "

" I only want Maelgwyn ! " She turned wildly to Marged. " But I must blot it out, stamp it out. I won't see him again. True love is sacrifice." The words mocked her, but their truth could not be denied. " I will write and tell him now that I must not see him again."

" There is no post until to-morrow, and then you must walk to the Bridge. There is a letter box in the wall. It is only cleared once a day."

" But to-morrow, Marged fach, I may change my mind. Maelgwyn will never break with me, he is too honourable. I shall be like a stone around his neck.

I could not bear to see his love die. . . . I will write now."

"And post it on the way to the horse jumping."

"Oh! Marged, I am too miserable to go to Llandair. Let me stay here. . . ."

"Have you no pride?" cried Marged. "When a woman is hurt by love, that is her time to smile."

Nest wrote her sad little letter with a trembling hand.

"This is to set you free, Maelgwyn. I am sure that we should be foolish to marry. Lord Cadvan has been here and explained it all to me. Nest."

* * * * *

When the door is shut on love, life becomes a prison cell. No sunshine, only chill remembrance; longing . . . repining. Hope and ambition die, the soul is crushed. . . . Nest fought against the listlessness which seemed to encompass her like a net. Marged tried to comfort her in her rough hard way:

"Live to my age," she declared, "and you will find that man is out for one thing—himself. Work pays better than a sweetheart. The reward is your own. Marry and you labour for another, and he spends your savings in the old pub. Oh! Oh!" cried Marged, strong in her zeal to show the folly of matrimony, "Men are bad lots. Deceivers and lazy dogs. When your father is gone to the Almighty King, come you here, Nest fach! Beauty passes swiftly when youth takes flight, and then no man gives you as much as a wink on market day. Come you here, little maid, and have you nothing whateffer to do with the boys bach!"

Nest heard Marged calling to Jossi as soon as it was light on the day of the horse jumping. Marged was

clad in her Sabbath clothes, a red blouse and a navy blue skirt. A muslin scarf, lace edged, was passed around her neck and tied in an impressive bow beneath her double chin. A mushroom shaped hat, with a tuft of black feathers crowned her hair. The trap was brought to the door, and Marged got up into the front seat, and drawing a small plaid shawl around her shoulders she fastened it on her breast with a large brooch containing a lock of her grandmother's hair. Nest sat by her side and Jossi behind with the dog.

The road to Llandair was crowded with country carts, motors, charabancs and traps. Horses with their manes gaily decorated with ribbons, and strong frisky bulls, flocks of sheep, and fat pigs, all made for the same spot. The old market town with its fine arched bridge built by Inigo Jones picturesquely situated below wooded heights, on the banks of a river.

Marged whipped up the horse and thinking of her share in the selling of the harp to Cadvan, she peered into Nest's pale face and said :

"Come, come, my girl. Let's have a smile. You and I will travel a bit and see the world. All my life I have wanted to see St. Paul's Cathedral and Spurgeon's Chapel, Holborn Circus."

"No indeed, I do not want to go anywhere," said Nest shortly. They drew near to the blackened ruins of a castle and in the fields below was the horse jumping competition. The field was surrounded by canvas tents wherein refreshments were served. Marged took charge of Fan, the dog, whilst Jossi went off to put up the horse and cart.

Marged had a host of friends ; ruddy faced farmers, cattle dealers, and judges of stock at agricultural shows Marged of Craig Wen was a celebrity in the county. A notable figure of Welsh rural life ! Visitors

nudged each other as she made her way over the turf with the strides of a man. She and Nest found a white-washed barn with a long table running down the centre, generously supplied with piles of bread and butter, bottles of sauce, salad, and fancy pastry. A plate of beef and ham and a big cup of tea was supplied to each patron. Marged climbed over one of the benches placed each side of the table, and a couple of farmers gave her a hand. She and Nest sat down between the two men, whose sheep dogs were tethered to a post outside. Young farmers gaitered, trim and smart, sought to engage Nest in conversation. They passed pickles and pastries down the table to her, hoping to coax her into friendliness. She rewarded them with one of her sweet smiles, and forced herself to talk, remembering Marged's advice: "When a woman is hurt by love that is her chance to smile." They urged her to:

"Come and watch the trials."

"Go on, go on and see the fun," cried Marged, hugely delighted at the turn of events. There was Moses Morris from Farm Ty Newydd, a gay young bachelor, who farmed many acres, and was known to be on the look out for a tidy girl for a wife. Brookes of Farm Plas Isa, a widower and Essec Phillips of Farm Nant y Bont, with money in the bank. He gazed at Nest when he helped himself to pickled onions and suddenly he had a desire to get rid of his fussy housekeeper: "I'd give up freedom for such a wench as Marged's niece," he decided, wiping his mouth on the back of his hand.

Nest hardly noticed the men, although they feasted their eyes upon the glory of her womanhood. But she loved the brown eyed dogs. Many of them were not pure bred sheep dogs in the ordinary sense of the

word, but dogs specially crossed for a definite purpose, many having a spaniel and a terrier strain. These dogs are sagacious and obedient, careful of the sheep in their charge, and not so lazy as the dog of pure breed.

Nest and Merged took up a position on a hillock. Sheep used for important trials are chosen from various folds. At the sound of the judge's whistle, several sheep were let loose, they were strangers to each other, not prone to follow one another but to wander apart! Outside a tent sat "the elect," the county and those members of society who were considered "influential" in the district. A few yards in front of this distinguished line, sat the judges at a long table. And now the whistle was blown. A shepherd was standing up, his dog eager, expectant at his side. The shepherd pointed with his stick far away to the spot from whence the sheep had been let loose, they were very much like the colour of the rocks, they were half hidden by bushes and undergrowth. Away went the dog, the crowd watched in breathless silence, sometimes breaking into enthusiastic cheers and sternly repressed by an angry "Shush! Shush!" by those enthusiasts afraid of disturbing the dog. And now the shepherd directed the dog by whistling between his fingers:—there was a breathless hush, a suppressed cry of excitement, the dog had spotted the sheep. Down they came, hither, thither, beneath wire between tubs placed to form obstacles and on between fences, until at last they were rounded up by the dog into the fold . . .

Nest found herself half laughing and crying. She clapped her hands and cried:

"Well indeed to goodness, sheep dogs are wonderful animals." And she gave a cry. "Why, it's Hew, that's our dog, Taffy!"

She left Marged and her train of admirers. Betti was standing just outside the pen. She wore a long brown coat, and a red flower nodded gaily in her black hat.

"Oh, Miss Nest," cried Betti joyfully. "There's glad I am to see you. Look down there! They have just come. What do you think of that woman wearing an eyeglass and trying to look like a man!"

Nest felt her heart give a mighty leap. She saw Maelgwyn. . . . A woman was looking up to him laughing and talking, and he was interested. Strange that jealousy ever magnifies trifles. Nest had never seen Lady Morvyth look so attractive, as in her jade green country clothes. Her smart country hat, with its coquettish multi-coloured wing, was tremendously becoming.

Nest turned wildly away. Oh, to escape! To get away from a crowd that had suddenly become a sea of mocking faces! She noticed a man coming towards her, a well groomed man, just as well dressed as Maelgwyn and his crowd! He was eager to speak to her—and again came the memory of Marged's words, "When a woman is hurt by love, that is her chance to smile!"

Betti was saying something about going to have a cup of tea with Hew, but Nest hardly heard her, the man had reached her now. . . .

"I've been all the way up to Craig Wen. Oh, I found it all right and I heard that you had just left."

"We got up very early, Sir Rhys, my Auntie Marged before it was light. Is my father better to-day?"

Morgan hesitated for a moment before replying, Nest's loveliness drove the blood to his brain. To-day she was pale, she reminded him of the roses that gem the hedges in the luxuriant Welsh valleys.

"I think he is brighter. What an interesting man he is when one can get him to talk. I should like to take him away, up to London to see some of the exhibitions. He wants rousing out of himself."

In a vague sort of way Nest felt that there was a good deal more behind this suggestion than she was able to fathom. There was a softening in the inflexion of Morgan's voice, a sympathetic attitude, so subtle that it almost suggested a caress.

In a careless, unhappy way, Nest was grateful for his sympathy. At a certain stage of human misery, stray words of comfort are gratifying, even acceptable, like manna from the Heavens when there is famine. Betti and Hew strolled away. Marged had gone off into the town "to do a little business on her own." Before leaving Nest she had said :

"Now if we miss each other in this crowd, be sure and look out for Jossi and the cart, just outside the big entrance gate."

"Let us have a walk round the field," Morgan suggested, "or are you tired of this? Can I take you to see any of the sights in the neighbourhood?"

"Oh, no, there is plenty going on here," Nest declared hastily, for although it hurt her to see Maelgwyn with Lady Morvyth, it was torture that must be endured. It was anguish for her to see him with another woman, and yet she could not tear herself away. She reasoned unhappily: "I must be near to him for as long as possible—before the end." Thus in secret she feasted her eyes upon Maelgwyn, for strange is the logic of a woman's love. The lover who makes a woman suffer is ever the true custodian of her heart.

Morgan was enchanted. To-day he saw Nest in a fascinating and gentle mood, responsive to his sugges-

tions, falling in easily with his wishes. Little did he know that it was sheer indifference to his burning admiration that made her so totally unconscious, and so easy to manage!

They had walked away to the edge of the crowd. The horses attracted Morgan's attention. He confided to Nest his desire to settle down and breed from stock. "I was talking to your father about it," he went on artfully. "He knows a lot about cattle."

"Well, of course," Nest answered, "my grandfather was a farmer, and I have heard it said that my grandmother was just as clever as he was in the lambing season. But father does not care for the land."

"No," Morgan agreed quietly. "Jestyn has told me much about his troubles, and you are so young. . . It is not fair that his misfortunes should cast such dark shadows across your path. That is one of the reasons why I went to Craig Wen. I want to banish all the shadows away and to fill your life with sunshine. I want to do something for your father too, that is my great desire, for your sake."

Nest looked up at him in surprise.

"Why should you wish to do all these things for me?"

Surreptitiously he caught her hand. No woman had ever thrilled him like this girl, with her tender musical voice, her artless smile, and the voluptuous curving lines of her graceful figure.

"Because I love you." His voice shook with passion, and Nest stepped away from him with a sharp exclamation of horror.

"You mustn't love me. I couldn't love you in return . . . never!"

"But you are made for love," Morgan urged undaunted, her reluctance firing his ardour.

"I thought once," she said in a low troubled voice, "that I was made for love—but I know now that it is not true!"

"You have never known love yet," Morgan protested. "It takes a man who has lived to teach a woman what love really means. I offer this faithful, constant adoration to you, Nest. Be my wife. Your father shall remain with you. Your home, his home. I am a rich man. If you don't like country life, the world is open to us."

She gave a quivering sigh. If she married Sir Rhys Morgan she would save Maelgwyn from poverty and spare herself the temptation of dragging him down into the abyss of her great passion. She could show Maelgwyn that he was not the only man of position who wished to marry her, and how he would hate her then! What an insurmountable barrier would rise between them. She could show Lord Cadvan, too, that his wealth was as much despised by her, as by the woman who had jilted him for love—But alas this love that her mother knew could not outweigh the disadvantages of poverty. All the more reason to put Maelgwyn far, far away. She had read what her mother had to say about poverty. . . . "It is for my father that I want peace," she muttered to herself. Morgan heard her troubled reasoning.

"Nest, give me the right to try and bring peace into the evening of his life!"

"Oh, indeed, you must give me time to think," she cried. It had come so swiftly upon her, this self-revelation of a man she hardly knew. And yet he had thought of her, dreamt of her, longed for her, ever since the first hour that he had met her at Castell Cadvan, with Cadvan's priceless pearls hanging around her throat, vieing with the creamy beauty of her skin.

They were both so deeply engrossed in conversation that they did not notice Maelgwyn coming towards them. He gave a curt nod to Morgan.

"Excuse me one moment," he said. "I want to speak to Miss Anwyl."

Morgan stood aside.

"Betti told me you were here, Nest. I had to get away for a moment to tell you that I cannot get over to Craig Wen to-morrow. Just before I left home my uncle insisted on my going to the meet at Four Crosses in the morning. I found it difficult to refuse."

CHAPTER XXVI

STIMULATED BY RISKS !

A WOMAN in love is no student of discretion, if she were, half the spice would be missing from the cake ! She refuses to be ruled by her head, she revels in the domination of her heart.

Nest was sacrificing herself and saving her lover from the malicious schemings of Cadvan. These reflections offered a vestige of comfort. In her intense suffering there was the faint glory of the martyr's halo . . . but the glory of the halo was not altogether satisfying when Nest came face to face with Maelgwyn. He was tremendously attractive, so full of life, the very sight of him thrilled Nest with wild longing for the strength of his arms. The knowledge that he had strayed to her from another woman, was like placing a match to a trail of gunpowder. He was weakening the bond ! An angry flush dyed her face scarlet.

" You can hunt with Lady Morvyth, every day of your life, as far as I am concerned," she told him. " You Cadvans think the world belongs to you, that it is only necessary for you to raise a little finger to attract any girl who crosses your path. Well, at any rate, you are wrong in my case. I don't want to see you any more."

At the sound of her raised voice, Morgan walked a little further away. There was a rift within the lute.

The love-making of Cadvan's heir was not taking quite such an easy course as it might have been expected to have done. Was fate going to help Morgan's cause? Might he not have flung his store of enticing promises before Nest at a moment when her passion for this other man was weakening? In his time Morgan had not been a stranger to that peculiar emotion which is described as "love at the rebound."

"Nest, Nest," Maelgwyn protested, "why show temper now? You know we decided to be careful."

"I am tired of being careful," she retorted with a stamp of her foot. "Why don't you act like a man? I would rather be dead, than have to toe the line to any old tune Lord Cadvan cares to call. I am sick of it. Good-bye."

She turned from him. Maelgwyn watched her half-dazed, puzzled, irresolute. He saw her walk away defiantly, to Rhys Morgan, who gave her a welcoming smile. . . . With a shrug of his shoulders Maelgwyn went off to find Morvyth and her cousin.

"Another admirer?" Morgan asked Nest.

"The Cadvans think they are lords of creation," was her angry reply.

Morgan laughed, and hardly realising what she was doing, Nest strolled out of the field with him into the pleasant woods that glorify the valley.

"The Cadvans must be made to see the error of their ways," said Morgan.

"Well, anyway, I hope I shall not meet Maelgwyn Cadvan again for as long as I live," Nest retorted.

There was a tense pause, which gave Morgan time to regain his self-control, but in spite of his efforts, his voice was not quite steady when he said:

"Do you really mean that?"

"Why, yes, of course."

"Then why not marry me. I can make you a great lady in the county. The Morgans have been on this land for centuries. Come back with me to Ugly House and make your old father happy. I know all about the trouble between him and the Cadvans. There need be no further banishment for you at Craig Wen."

She looked up at him wonderingly. He had become a saviour. Now that Maelgwyn had departed from her, what did it matter what she did with her life! Morgan was offering her the greatest solace that a troubled heart can receive, a chance of forgetfulness.

Morgan used every argument he could devise to persuade her to fall in with his wishes, and all the time he was talking, Nest's will was weakening. There is nothing in the world more calculated to help a woman to destroy her own happiness, than a blow to her pride by the man whom she adores. That he makes her feel small in the eyes of others, that he slights her, and wounds a nature all the more sensitive because she loves, these are the cruel rocks which drive her to despair. . . .

"Yes, indeed, I will come back with you to Ugly House," she answered, for she reasoned, "If there is no joy for me in life, who am I to withhold happiness from my father?" And then another thought came to her. "If by any chance Maelgwyn goes to Craig Wen to-morrow, I will prove by my absence that my letter was final. . . ." She would save him from herself.

"I must go and find my Auntie Marged," Nest said tremulously.

"And tell her," Morgan answered, holding Nest's hands firmly within his own, "tell her that you are going to marry me."

She was as white as the crest of Snowdon when she met his earnest gaze.

"Would you risk marrying me, when I have no love for you?"

"My dear, a man in love, is stimulated by risks. I could give comfort to your father. . . ." Morgan paused for a moment choosing his words, "I could make you love me."

Nest said despairingly :

"Sometimes you tempt me to try the experiment."

"Take a sporting chance," Morgan retorted quickly. He could read her like a book. The reason of her hesitation. Whether she liked it or not, her affections were involved with Maelgwyn. Change of scene, change of environment, these tactics might work wonders. "Let me announce our engagement," he urged. "I will give my word as a gentleman not to hurry you into marriage. Give me the right as your father's future son-in-law to take him away. The three of us can go away together! I've had a place lent to me in Chelsea. Mr. Anwyl will be able to look across the Thames and dream his dreams and I will show you life."

"If it will satisfy my father!"

"You know it will do that, Nest!"

Her timidity enthralled him. Her wistful charm was fascinating. If only he could get her away from Wales with Anwyl. . . . Morgan relied upon his knowledge of women to be able to obtain an early consent to their marriage.

"Very well, I will be engaged to you!"

In the shadow of the stone wall he kissed Nest, restraining his passion; he felt a shiver pass through her body as his lips rested on her mouth. He was disconcerted. Was his power over women waning? Was he one of the dogs who had had his day?

"You mustn't do that," he laughed.

"Do what?"

"Shiver when I kiss you."

"Perhaps it was because I was cold," said Nest wearily.

"It's the first time I've ever heard a Welshwoman confess to coldness."

"Well, indeed," she retorted, "you have been fortunate with your experiences." This flash of her old spirit amused him, betrayed to this connoisseur of women a truth. Nest inflamed by the delights of love, would bring joy to her captor.

"Oh, Nest, Nest," he cried throwing his arm rapturously around her, "you are a wonderful girl. We shall hit it off together splendidly."

She drew away from him startled by the passion in his voice.

"But you mustn't hurry me," she faltered, "you mustn't hurry me to marry you. I said I'd be engaged. . . ."

"Little girl, I won't hurry you," he answered reassuringly.

They were wandering out of the wood, across the main road, thronged with a stream of char-a-bancs, luxurious cars, modest Fords and every conceivable kind of vehicle. And she saw Jossi in the cart and Marged struggling up into the front seat.

"Come, come, hurry, my girl," cried Marged. "I wanted to be well on my way home by this time. Who is your fine friend?" and she added with a laugh, "Might as well try and keep wasps out of a jam pot, as boy bachs away from a pretty wench!"

Rhys Morgan looked up into the rugged good-natured face, and he answered in his usual nonchalant manner:

"Even the devil is not quite so black as he is painted

at times, and what is a poor defenceless man to do in the presence of so much beauty ? ”

“ The sooner my cousin finds a husband for his girl, the better ! ”

“ We are in complete agreement,” Rhys answered cordially. “ I am taking Nest back to Ugly House with me. I want to tell her father the good news.”

Marged gazed in bewilderment from one to the other.

“ Have these men all taken leave of their senses ? What indeed is the matter with them ! ”

“ It shows excellent taste on my part,” Morgan replied, “ to have chosen Nest to become my wife.”

“ Ach y fy, men are as mad as bulls at the sight of a scarlet petticoat ! Hussy, you are trifling with the stranger,” she cried to Nest. “ Yesterday were you not meeting Cadvan’s heir ? Did your father not send you to me to keep you away from his love-making ? It is out of the frying pan into the fire with a vengeance.”

Nest shot a startled glance at Morgan, when Marged let off this piece of intelligence, but his expression of bland contentment did not change. Marged became distrustful when she discovered that her shot had missed fire. She turned angrily to Nest, her suspicions were aroused :

“ You two are playing a trick on me and Anwyl. Birds of a feather flock together, the old saying is true enough. There is more of your mother’s blood in you than your father’s. Sir Rhys Morgan, is a big man like Captain Cadvan. You have made it up between you to get the better of me. But I am not so simple, as I look. Jump up into the back seat, my girl, and I will take you safely back to Craig Wen.”

“ Come down from the cart,” urged Nest, “ and if

you will listen to me, Auntie Marged, it will be better for all of us."

Grunting and grumbling, Marged alighted from the trap. Sir Rhys lit a cigar, and he strolled away, for Nest's expressive eyes had told him more plainly than words, that she wished to argue the point alone with the obdurate Marged.

"Nice goings on, for sure," Marged cried wrathfully.

"I will not go back to Craig Wen," Nest said firmly.

"It is true, I am engaged to Sir Rhys. He has promised to give happiness to my father. He is going to show us the other side of these old mountains."

"You have sold your soul for a mess of pottage!" cried Marged.

"To-day I hate Maelgwyn," said Nest earnestly, "but if he came to Craig Wen in the morning I might love him as much to-morrow as I hate him to-day!"

"Then go back to your own home," Marged answered crossly. "And when they have plucked your feathers between them, hap you'll be glad enough to seek shelter with me."

CHAPTER XXVII

SIGNALS OF DISTRESS

NEST and Sir Rhys Morgan watched Marged drive away. Morgan had hired a car from Bethesda. Gloating over the possession of a new toy, he held Nest's hand and promised her all manner of things which experience had taught him were prized by women! He painted their future in glowing colours, just as if material objects could become a recompense for love. . . .

Nest listened to Morgan as if in a dream. She was trying to drive thoughts of Maelgwyn away from her, but such action only brought more vividly to her memory the joy of those days when they had been happy together. . . . Those little intimacies of love, trivial, but full of poignant charm. . . . Could any other man so fill her life, that he would become as necessary to her as Maelgwyn?

At last they turned into the Pass which led to Ugly House.

"Mister Jestyn was in his studio," so said Gitto. They found him seated before an empty easel, and when he saw them he waved his arms dramatically and cried:

"I feel like a father who has lost his child. At the last moment I decided that my *Motibae* should face the critics. It has gone to the New Gallery, now we shall see what they have to say about it." He caught sight of Morgan's strained features and he laughed.

"There are times when the consideration of Art comes before everything. Even friendship must be sacrificed before its claims. I don't believe a word I'm saying; I'm only trying to tell you, that there is nothing for you to worry about."

Morgan frowned, and he broke in hastily:

"Indeed, I don't know what you mean. Where is Anwyl?"

"Well, well, he was about here not long ago. Maybe he has gone along the road for a stroll. Why, anything wrong?"

"May I tell him, Nest?" Rhys Morgan bent longingly over her.

"Well, of course, now I remember," said Jestyn, laughing good-humouredly, "you ought to be at Craig Wen, Nest. What brings you down here?"

Jestyn had been living in the clouds during the packing of his beloved masterpiece. He rubbed his eyes and stared hard at the man and the girl standing before him.

"Why, what is it, you two!" The truth was pressing itself upon him, and another truth too, unpleasant, but there all the same. Although Nest was trying to mask it, with tremulous smiles, her changing colour was the signal of her distress. She was unhappy, albeit she had been a willing victim, why? Jestyn frowned, after his art, was not Nest dearer to him than anyone in the world?

"Yes, you've guessed," said Rhys. "You know what I told you when first I came. I wanted a wife, the wife of my choice, the girl I had met at Cadvan. There has never been a time yet," he went on in his arrogant way, "when I have not gained that which I wished to possess."

"So, so, there is to be a wedding?" Jestyn was

trying to assume his light jocular air, he even made a bold effort to whistle "Crawshay Bailey," but it trailed off into a minor key and ended in a sigh, when he took Nest's hand within his own, he saw her lips tremble as she whispered :

"Not a wedding just yet, but an engagement !"

"That's it," Rhys's laugh sounded metallic, but still confident. "I'll get her out of this environment as soon as possible," he was deciding again. "Away from Cadvan, I'll dress her well. All Welsh women like pretty clothes," and then he turned to a tray full of letters. He chose one bearing a foreign stamp ; he changed colour, and whilst Nest was talking to Jestyn, he opened it hurriedly.

"Good news ?" Jestyn asked.

But Rhys did not answer, like one in a dream he read the fateful message which had been readdressed to him from his club.

"Guard the jewel of the God Mahadeva until we meet. Motibae."

He crushed the letter into his pocket when Nest said : "I must hurry away now and find my father."

"We'll go together, Nest," Rhys turned to Jestyn and added : "Can she stay here for the night ?"

"Nest knows that well enough."

"Wait until I come back," Nest interposed. "I want to explain everything to my father, when we are alone together."

Rhys was still unconvinced. He could not bear her out of his sight.

"I will come too."

"Man bach, let Nest have her own way," Jestyn remonstrated. "If you knew her type as well as I do, you'd soon find out that it's silken cords, **not** chains that will hold her."

Nest hurried out into the kitchen.

Gitto and his wife sought to engage their favourite in friendly conversation. They plied her with questions about the horse jumping, and Nest had difficulty in restraining her impatience.

"Have you seen my father?" she asked.

"Well, indeed, girl fach," Gitto answered, "when last I saw him, he was wandering along the road towards Nant y Glo. He seemed unhappy, Miss Nest. Last night I heard him walking about his room. Once I was afraid that he was ill, and I knocked at the door and asked, 'Is it all right with you, Mister Anwyl bach?' but he would not answer, and so I went away. You must look after him, Miss Nest dear, don't leave him. . . ."

Nest did not wait to hear more. The shades of night were at hand, already a ghostly moon was showing in the heavens. She rushed down the path, through the gate, and along the white tramping road.

"Father, father bach," she cried, but to her call there came no answer.

* * * * *

It was after the last nail had been driven into the packing case, which contained Jestyn's picture, that Anwyl found himself in the throes of his old despairing mood. He had listened patiently to Jestyn's enthusiasm about his work. Jestyn, simple-minded, guileless as a child in many respects, was a terrible egotist where his art was concerned.

"I can copy any one of them if I like," he would declare. "John, Nevinson, Orpen!" and seizing his palette he would work at a rapid breathless pace, mimicking the outstanding features of another master's work, his ruffled hair adding an elfish look to his mischievous satyr-like features.

"Stick to your own style, man," once Anwyl had feebly remonstrated.

Jestyn laughed and answered :

"Motibae will wipe them off the face of the earth!"

Anwyl strolled away. The front door was open and the gate inviting. Ahead was the road that led to the mountains, to Nant y Glo, and the Lake of Blue in the hills. Half mechanically he strode along the road.

"After all," he soliloquised, "there is no place like home." Albeit it was a place of desolation as compared to the haven it once had been. Familiar objects brought some consolation . . . although she had been false to him . . . Myfanwy. A sob escaped him, a pent-up expression of grief that was gnawing at him like a beast of prey. Nant y Glo gave him memories. Were they not better than no memories at all! Often Anwyl would sit in the room that Myfanwy had shared with him, the sacred garden of their love. He would look around, longing for her. On the oak dressing table were her brushes, white ivory, with her monogram fashioned in silver. Often he had watched her brush out her long black glossy hair; innumerable thoughts of her sweetness created an atmosphere that was pregnant with love and suffering. . . .

And all these emotions he missed at Ugly House, and so he decided to return home. He hastened along. Betti would be there and Davy and Hew. And Nest? He would be glad when she was home again. Perhaps after all, she would see the folly of her ways. Cadvan's heir was not for her. . . . And then he sighed. He felt tired and old. Nant y Glo was but the empty cage from whence love had flown. His mind wandered back again to Jestyn. Jestyn with his fund of enthusiasm. What was life without enthusiasm, what was work without it? A hopeless

thing, lacking the magnetic spark that invites success. What was life without inspiration? A heavy, material existence, lacking imagination and beauty. And work without idealism?—laborious, a monster crushing the lifeblood out of humanity.

The mountains were bleak and forbidding, a veil of snow covered Trifaen. The air was frosty. Anwyl felt cold, miserable, depressed. At last he came in sight of Nant y Glo. He crossed the bridge hurriedly. He called Hew and Davy, but no friendly sound greeted him, not even the bark of a dog!

He went to the door, and found it closed, locked, barred against him, the master! To his overwrought mind came the agonised thought, he had frightened Betti away, Betti, his faithful servant. . . . Hew had gone too, and Davy. And perhaps Nest would not return to him. . . . He put the full weight of his body against the door, but it was of oak, carved long ago, to resist mountain storm and unfriendly visitor. The door would not yield to him. He leant against it exhausted. He took off his black felt hat, his silver-grey hair was tossed hither and thither by the wind. Taking his red cotton handkerchief out of his pocket, he wiped his face. Perspiration jewelled his broad intellectual forehead. He passed along the garden path. There was the shed, but that too was locked against him. Dominated by sudden desperation he flung himself against the door, it yielded. He stood before his neglected work. He picked up his chisel and stared at it, tears fell from his eyes and blinded his vision. Here was his last piece of sculpture, the shepherd and the sheep. He gazed feverishly at the figure of the man, and suddenly he took up his chisel, and began to work. Resolutely he reshaped the stern features. They took an expression of exquisite gentle-

ness. The ragged beard of the shepherd became pointed, the hair long, the eyelids drooping in pity over the dead lamb. Unconsciously Anwyl fashioned the face of his Saviour. The sorrowful pitying features of the Christ.—He sank on his knees, and kissed the feet of the figure carved in stone. His eyes fell upon the rough hewn base, and rapidly he began to cut letters into the stone, they took shape under the magic of that master hand, until at length, the words stood out so that all who gazed upon the Shepherd-Christ, would read the message wrought thereon!

“Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

Rest . . . how deeply he longed for rest. Peace, the peace that passeth all understanding. Where could it be found? Not at Nant y Glo, the deserted home of his people. . . .

With the chisel still clutched tightly in his hand he wandered hatless across the bridge. Wearily once more he made his way along the road, and then he turned away towards the path that leads to the Blue Lake. In the distance the immense Mynydd Mawr reared his rugged sides, and beyond the Nant, the pools, and Llyn Ffynnon y Gwàs. Southwards stretched a range of mountain summits and hollows. In the distance Snowdon was faintly seen, towering into the evening sky. And in this dreary vale was one small pool encircled by the dark broken masses of rock, which are so frequently found in the remote recesses of the eternal hills. . . .

Nest made her way valiantly along the road, her feet hardly appeared to touch the ground, fear winged her steps. Gitto's words struck terror to her soul. Her father was still wrestling with his broken heart. If only she could reach him quickly to comfort him and say:

"Father bach, the night has passed. We will go forth into the bright sunshine." At last she came in sight of Nant y Glo. Someone was leaving the house, in the far distance she saw it was a man. Her father! She recognised his curious gait, his coat flying open in the wind. She called to him, but he did not hear. . . . She began to run. . . . Where was his destination at this hour? He turned from the village, along grassy slopes that led to difficult paths and rocky byways.

"I must reach him whatever," her exclamation was a cry of terror. She rushed on desperately, along a familiar road, that seemed never ending. She saw her father turn round a steep outstanding boulder of rock, and she tore after him.

At last the grassy slope, the boulder of rock, the desolate valley, and the sinister pool. At the edge of the water, she saw him pause, but only for a moment. He lifted his head towards the darkening skies. If she had been nearer to him she would have heard his cry:

"Oh, God! into Thy hands I commit my spirit."

"Father!" The terrified cry echoed through the valley, it reached him faintly, almost like the cry of a bird as he made his way with slow deliberation into the water. But he did not turn back. In his younger days he had frequently watched the baptisms in the stream. After a revival, the multitude would flock in great numbers, men, women and children. And the Minister would take repentant sinners by the hand, and lead them forth, and in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, he would dip them in the waters, and their sins would fall away from them. Cleansed and singing hymns of praise they returned to the river bank. . . .

Nest had reached the dark rocks at the brim of the

pool. Anwyl was wandering out into the water, sometimes stumbling forward as his feet became entangled with the weeds which grew at the bottom of the lake. And now the waters had reached the old man's shoulders, he felt the swelling currents. He was lifted upwards. No longer was he master of his own limbs. . . . It would soon be over . . . this life which tortured him !

" Father ! "

Bewildered he tried to turn. Nest ? What was she doing there, struggling, struggling and shouting as if she were mad. The icy cold water numbed his senses. . . . She was fighting her way towards him, and when she felt herself rapidly drifting out of her depth, she struck out boldly, whilst the old man moaned, beating the waters with his hands, trying to save himself from those cruel under-currents which eddied around him. They had become a brutal enemy now that his child was in danger !

" Nest, Nest, Nest," he moaned, " it's growing dark. Don't be afraid, girl fach. Myfanwy will be waiting, not for me, but for you. . . . "

His feet slipped away from beneath him. The under-currents had proved too strong, or too kind. . . . Nest saw his shoulders disappearing beneath the waters. A few seconds more, and it would be too late !

" Father ! " She seized him, and pushed him ahead. Forward, forward, on she struggled with her burden, until at length they reached the shallow water.

Tears were streaming down Nest's face, the old man was exhausted. Nest found it difficult to walk with her wet garments clinging around her limbs.

" I was lonely, very lonely," she heard him muttering, " and I'm tired, Nest, what use am I to you ? I have spoilt your life, as I spoiled Myfanwy's life. . . . "

Nest threw her arm around him. "Hurry, hurry, father bach," she cried. "You and I are going to start life together, a new life. You shall have no more trouble with me about Maelgwyn. I hate him, just as much as you hate him. We are going away, you and I. We'll forget all about this place. . . ."

"I have no money to go away?"

"Sir Rhys Morgan is arranging that. I'm going to marry him. . . ."

Anwyl paused, and he leant against a boulder of rock muttering breathlessly:

"Morgan is a rich man, but can riches give happiness?"

"Come, come, father bach, hurry now," cried Nest, seeking to evade his question.

"No, no," Anwyl persisted. "Answer me this thing. You are not marrying Morgan because you wish to make things easier for me. You love him . . . you made a mistake about this Cadvan man?"

"Come, come, father," Nest urged.

"Answer me! You made a mistake——"

"Well, yes, indeed to goodness," Nest was laughing and crying, dragging her father along by the hand, over the pass, until they came to the tramping road. She heard the sound of voices.

"Nest, is that you? Have you found your father?"

She stumbled forward, worn out and exhausted, Rhys Morgan gathered her in his arms, and Jestyn helped his old friend into a car waiting at the roadside.

CHAPTER XXVIII

“SAVE ME FROM MYSELF!”

THE following day Nest's brief note arrived at Castell Cadvan, and in that poignant message of farewell, Maelgwyn discovered the value of true love. He fought a battle with himself. His first impulse was to brush his irritation aside, and to go to Craig Wen as quickly as possible.

“Too bad of Nest to play fast and loose with me in this fashion,” he thought angrily. He had had a restless night. Her furious words rang in his ears and tormented him beyond endurance.

“Why don't you act like a man! I'd rather be dead than toe the line to any old tune that Cadvan cares to call. I'm sick of it. Good-bye!”

“Of course, she didn't mean what she had written. How could she say good-bye,” he argued helplessly, and yet he was afraid. It was absurd! True love was not made of so frail a thing. He tried to comfort himself. Nest was jealous, jealous because he was with Morvyth. Morvyth who meant no more to him than a stranger! Of course Welsh blood was inflammable, easily stirred to anger, especially when affections were involved. Thus Maelgwyn argued. And he didn't mind jealousy in the girl he loved, it amused him, flattered him! When they were married, he would soon prove to her how little cause she had for jealousy. . . .

He went straight off to find Lord Cadvan. He was writing letters in his library. He looked up in surprise when Maelgwyn entered, and he stared earnestly into the pale agitated features of his heir.

“You want me? Anything wrong with the horses? Morvyth is annoyed because you were not down to breakfast, I hate to inflict my theories upon the younger generation, but you owe something to your class, my boy. I told her you would hunt with her to-day.”

“I had a quarrel with Nest yesterday. Met her at Llandair. Things are becoming serious. I love her, sir, I have come to make one last appeal.”

There was no doubt about Maelgwyn's sincerity. The fight he was making came something as a surprise even to Cadvan. He toyed with his paper knife a minute or two before replying:

“But there is no reason to make an appeal to me. You are at perfect liberty to do as you like.”

“I know that, sir, but you wish us to pay a price. Your terms are that I become a pauper, and Nest . . .”

“I really cannot waste any further time with you,” Cadvan exclaimed irritably. “Your fate is entirely in your own hands.”

“Then it shall be in my own hands,” retorted Maelgwyn. “I'll prove at last that whatever other faults I may have, at least, I am a man!”

In the hall Morvyth was walking impatiently up and down, a striking and beautiful figure, in her perfectly cut riding habit.

“Well, lazy one,” she smiled. “Hurry up and get into your kit.”

“Sorry, can't come!”

The tone of his voice was a revelation to her. She flushed and said agitatedly: “Maelgwyn, you are

treating me badly, like a girl picked up out of the gutter!"

She drew back startled when he turned upon her furiously.

"Oh, why are you trying to embarrass me. You and my uncle are doing your best to ruin my life, but you won't succeed. I see my position clearly now, and my duty."

Without another word he turned away and left her. She saw him go off swiftly into the grounds. When her cousin joined her, she was tapping her boot impatiently with her jewelled riding crop.

"Maelgwyn, isn't he ready? We shall be late."

"He's not fox-hunting to-day," Morvyth retorted making a wry face. "He's girl hunting. Am I not a fool, he's the one man I've known who has treated me like dirt."

Nell shrugged her shoulders and laughingly remarked:

"And that being the case, he can insult you, annoy you, be a cad, a hero, an Adonis or the devil, and as long as he keeps up this attractive cave-man rôle, the beautiful Morvyth will be his very devoted and humble slave."

"Why talk rubbish?" Morvyth exclaimed angrily. "You know that I love him!"

"There are some people," was Nell's quiet retort, "who always seek the thing that is just a little beyond their reach."

Now that his decision was made Maelgwyn tore along the road that would eventually take him to Nant y Glo. In his present mood, such trifling considerations as speed limit did not concern him. At Bangor he was sharply called to order by an astute member of the smart Carnarvonshire police force. He muttered

excuses, and soon afterwards he was in the mountain pass that cut through the precipitous heights, upon which Craig Wen had been built. He came to the Roman Road, and at the Chapel gates of Bethel a small boy was eating a thick piece of bread, which possessed a goodly sprinkling of brown sugar upon the butter scraping beneath.

“Is Craig Wen near here?”

“Go straight up,” the boy answered. “But you cannot take the old car that way.”

“Look after it for me,” said Maelgwyn, “and I will give you half-a-crown when I come back.”

Marged was feeding her fowls when Maelgwyn came through the gate. When she saw his eager face, she said to herself: “Well, well, so this is the sweetheart, fine boy bach he is too.”

“I have come to see Nest,” he explained. “I am sure you are Marged, she told me about you.”

“I don’t expect she said much in my favour,” was Marged’s brief retort. “Nest is not here whatever.”

“Tell me where she is.”

“If I were you, I should leave her alone.”

“She’s got to marry me, and we’ll face the world together, starve together, if the need be!”

“Indeed man,” Marged retorted pompously, “you talk like a fool! Nest Anwyl will not starve. She is going to marry Sir Rhys Morgan. They went up to London this afternoon. Davy brought me the message. Anwyl’s gone too!”

CHAPTER XXIX

DEARER THAN LIFE !

MAELGWYN would not take Marged's statement seriously. The world wished to part him from Nest, he would take good care that it did not succeed. With a brief "Good-day," he strode down the Roman Road. He tossed the promised half-crown to the lad who was keeping guard over his car, and he made off towards Nant y Glo.

When he knocked on the door, Betti was on her knees washing the floor, and she called out shrilly : " Come in ! " for she thought it was the butcher's boy from Bethesda who visited the remote mountain district with a van that was in itself a travelling shop.

" No orders to-day," called out Betti, " the master's gone away and Miss Nest ! "

" My God, then it's true ! "

At the sound of his voice, she got up and wiped her hands on her coarse brown apron.

" Well, indeed, Captain Cadvan, so it's you," she peered into his pale features. " Well, well, you don't say that you loved her after all ! "

" Of course I loved her ! Why on earth do you talk such nonsense, Betti. Nest is dearer to me than life." He crossed over to the wide open fireplace, and sank down dejectedly.

" Well, well," sighed Betti, " you men are all alike. You don't value a thing until it's gone, then you cry

out like a baba chasing a butterfly. When it's caught you are ready to let it go again if its wings are damaged, but when it flies off you say : ' Well, indeed to goodness, that's the finest butterfly after all . . . I must have it.' "

" I've always loved your mistress, Betti, you know that is God's truth," Maelgwyn answered despairingly. " I've been up to Craig Wen, and Marged told me a damned story."

" Oh, oh, trust her for being a noisy wind-bag," Betti retorted crossly. She was jealous of the influence which the hardy old harp-maker tried to exert over the inmates of Craig Wen.

" You ought to know what Nest is to me," Maelgwyn exclaimed passionately. " It isn't true that she's engaged to Rhys Morgan ! "

" It all happened so quickly," Betti admitted. " I knew you would take it badly when the news slipped out. There was a sad place here last night. The master is ill—he was nearly drowned, and Miss Nest went after him—saved him ! "

" Good God ! "

" I think she was ill herself. Sir Rhys got hold of Howell, and he said, ' Get Mister Anwyl away for a change.' Sir Rhys persuaded the master to take the doctor's advice, and Miss Nest begged him to go. The master's never been right since the night he destroyed the tomb. It's haunted him. Miss Nest and Sir Rhys are to be married in London, and Hew and I are getting married any day. We'll take good care of the master when he comes back."

Maelgwyn paced the kitchen agitatedly.

" I'm going to find her. She's not going to marry Morgan if I can help it," he cried furiously. " Give me the address, Betti ! "

She flushed and hung her head :

" Sorry I am, sir, but I cannot do that."

" What do you mean ? Why do you refuse ? "

Betti hesitated, for her heart was stirred to pity by the agony of the man before her.

" Miss Nest forbade me to give you her address."

Maelgwyn remained motionless trying to fathom the meaning of her words, and when he got up his face was set in grim lines. He made his way across the kitchen and without another word he passed out. . . .

When he reached Castell Cadvan, Lady Morvyth and his uncle were out. He went off to his rooms, and packed up his things. Towards evening Cadvan and his guests returned from their day's sport. Cadvan was just going to dress for dinner when his nephew burst in upon him.

" You've ruined my life. You destroyed my letters to her," he raved, " you've driven Nest to a man like Morgan. They're to be married. He's taken her away. Now you can do just as you like with your money. I don't want it—I'll starve . . ."

An hour later the heir to Castell Cadvan was on his way to London, huddled up in a corner seat of a third class carriage, a figure of abject misery.

* * * * *

Jestyn was lying on the sofa in his studio at the close of a day, when Gitto came in.

" Do you want anything more, mister Jestyn bach ? "

" Well, no indeed, nothing more to-night," said Jestyn. " Remember that I must be called in good time in the morning. The light is so short, that I will get to work early."

Gitto hung about hesitatingly, at length he formulated his request. " My niece has got a new baba, and there's been a christening to-day. We'd like to go

down to her place for a bit if you've no objection, and you're not expecting anyone ? ”

“ Go by all means, Gitto. No one will be coming here to-night.”

Jestyn gave a sigh of relief when his servant left him. An old Tuscan lamp flooded the studio with light. It radiated on old beaten brass, and antique silver, and on the gorgeous sheen of peacock's feathers rising from a bird fashioned in burnished brass and upon his empty easel.

Ever since the hour that the Motibae had gone from him, he felt as if he had lost something that was part of himself. His masterpiece. . . .

He sprang up and helped himself to a whisky and soda.

“ Motibae, Goddess of life and death,” he muttered, holding his glass high until the vivid silk shaded lamp turned the liquid into gold. “ I drink to your immortal beauty and my undying fame—well, well, yes indeed —” he was trailing off from his high falutin manner, into his whimsical sing-song humour. There was a sudden tapping on the window-pane. Full of superstition Jestyn frowned. Was it a ghostly warning ? His nerves were all on edge since his experience with Anwyl on the night he had waded into the pool . . . and Nest, poor Nest . . . she had been sacrificed on the altar of devotion to her father. . . .

The tapping was persistent. Jestyn crossed to the lower end of the studio. He opened a French window leading into the garden. A woman pushed her way past him. She was closely veiled, and when she heard the door close she threw back the veil, and Jestyn cried out in astonishment and fear : “ Princess Motibae ! ”

For a moment he felt dazed. His picture had come to life.

"You must not call me Princess. Will you send Morgan Sahib to me. I have come all the way from Handinugger. I am disguised as the dancing girl Anandi. I am frightened, Cursetjee, the treasurer of the State, is following me!" She sank on to the sofa exhausted. Jestyn gave her some wine; the stimulant revived her.

"You are better?" he stammered. He was dumfounded by the presence of his visitor.

"Morgan Sahib, I must see him," Princess Motibae declared, a sudden passion shook her sensuous body. "To me he is as the sun in the azure heavens. They have betrothed me to Prince Padau, and I have fled . . . I love the Sahib. Even now I am thrilled by the memory of his caresses, they were as the hot sand of the desert flying in my face. But his embraces are life to me!" She flung her arms apart dramatically. Her dark hair looked like velvet against the silk of her fur-lined embroidered coat.

"Sir Rhys Morgan is not here!"

She broke out impatiently.

"Why do you try to deceive me! Go, seek him, I am weary. Heavy is my heart with longing. Many dangers have cast shadows around me." She closed her eyes and spoke as if she were repeating a lesson. "The life of the Princess Motibae is in danger. The State of Handinugger shall perish, and its palaces will run red with the blood of its princes. A white man came and spoke of love to Motibae, whose heart was as white as the flower of the lotus. The artist Sahib painted a picture of Motibae, so that he should go forth and become great among the graspers of the Earth. And because he was her lover Motibae gave to Morgan Sahib the sacred jewel of the God Mahadeva, for is it not a charm to keep love? But Mahadeva

shook the earth in his anger, and his sword gleamed crimson with the blood of vengeance, and Motibae has learnt from Joshi, the astrologer, that unless the jewel is returned to Handinugger, the State shall cease to exist. And not only the servants of Brahma shall perish, but also the white men who worship at unknown shrines. Therefore send my lover to me, and Cursetjee shall take the gem back to my father the Maharajah—I will remain here—and Morgan Sahib will marry the jewel of his heart. . . .”

Jestyn gazed fascinated into the white impassioned face. Motibae was not mistress of her own words when she spoke, and with a shudder, she stretched out her hands as if she were awakening from a trance.

“Well indeed, you are a good actress,” Jestyn smiled nervously, for he remembered Morgan’s forebodings about Motibae, and how he had laughed at his fears. “This is all nonsense, for sure,” said he. “Why should a jewel cause a State to fall and you, Princess, to perish?”

“You must not jest, oh! painter Sahib, for I love Rhys Morgan with the love no other man shall possess. His life is in danger. When he left me, I became weary of the desert of loneliness. The sun was a flame of fire that destroyed my soul, and I called to Mahadeva whom I had so long forgotten—‘Return the sacred jewel,’ came the message to me . . . I could not come alone, Cursetjee brought me. . . . But when Rhys sees me once again I will charm him with the scent of jasmine blossom. My love for him is as the love of the gods. . . .”

“And Cursetjee, who is this man?” asked Jestyn unable to curb his curiosity.

“Did you not hear me when I told you that he is the treasurer of the State. He knew that I gave the

Mahadeva jewel to Morgan Sahib. He threatened to tell my father, and so there was but one thing to do.—Long has Cursetjee sent messages of love to me. He decided to come to England to seek out Rhys, for he has sworn to the God to return the jewel. To keep Cursetjee in my power, I allow him to believe that he is my accepted lover. When we reached London, I escaped and came to find Rhys to warn him of his danger. . . .”

“The deuce you did,” cried Jestyn uneasily. “But he is not here !”

“If you value his life, oh, painter Sahib,” cried Motibae. “Tell me where I can find him.”

“What made you come to Wales to seek Morgan ?” Jestyn interrupted.

“I obtained his address through the India Office. Where is my beloved ?”

Jestyn frowned. What could he do ? Send this infatuated woman to Morgan, when Nest was with him. And if he did not do so what would be the effect on Morgan’s life ?

“It is too late to-day, whateffer,” said Jestyn. “My man, Gitto, is out and his wife, but when they return they will prepare a room for you for the night.”

Motibae was shivering violently.

“Well, indeed, I must try and find you something to eat,” he added. He went off into the larder, and found some cold meat. Within half-an-hour Motibae was drinking hot coffee and eating Jestyn’s not too delicately cut sandwiches.

CHAPTER XXX

"BECAUSE I LOVED YOU"

ON arriving in London Nest and her father found themselves in a beautiful cottage in Chelsea. There was an entrance hall that widened into a square-shaped dining room. The kitchen was at the side, and upstairs there was a blue and gold music room, a room in which Rhys Morgan had placed a lacquer writing cabinet and his safe. The bedrooms were decorated in futurist designs, each room was a miniature sitting room with every modern labour-saving device. A butler, his wife and daughter, exceedingly well-trained servants, ran the establishment.

During the journey to Euston, Nest's heart was as heavy as lead. The events that followed that awful night when she had struggled in the water to save her father's life, haunted her. Ifor Anwyl, tired, frightened and weak, permitted the strong personality of Rhys Morgan to dominate him. And now that Nest had renounced her love for Maelgwyn, she had no further interest in life, she was drifting.

Time passed, and during that period Morgan had done everything in his power to win Nest's affection. Anwyl did not object to his new surroundings. Directly it was known in artistic circles that the recluse sculptor was in London, the press was hot on his track, but Anwyl refused to see anyone. He relaxed the rule slightly when Jestyn's "Motibae" was exhibited. It

created immense interest. Crowds flocked to see this amazing work of art. The picture's supreme fascination lay in Motibae's smile, which the critics declared possessed as great a magnetism as the famous smile of Monna Lisa.

On St. David's Day, Sir Rhys Morgan had been asked to make a speech at the great annual dinner which is held by the Welsh in London. The Prime Minister was to be present. It was to be an important evening for the boys bach of old Cambria. The invitation was accepted by Morgan. Here was a chance to dazzle Nest. Knowing the Anwyl pride, he had persuaded Ifor to sell him a rough hewn study of some sheep. A large sum of money was credited to an account, which was temporarily opened for Anwyl at a bank in Holborn. Alone with Anwyl, Morgan had said :

"I want Nest to look smart at the St. David's Day dinner. I am very proud of my future wife."

Anwyl persuaded Nest to go out shopping, and she accompanied Morgan, with her bag stuffed with notes given to her by her father. Someone had told Morgan of a place off the beaten track, where an artist in fashioning clothes had an artistic shop, with a back and front room divided off by curtains. The proprietor, imperturbable and smiling, created his models to suit the style and pocket of his purchasers. The little girl typist, or chorus girl, received just as much expert attention as the fashionable woman of means from Mayfair, or the new smart set from the Finchley Road. When Daran saw Nest, his dark eyes sparkled. Here was a figure worth showing off, no need to conceal its charms in cunningly draped folds. It was a tragedy that in nine cases out of ten, an opulent purse was the accompaniment of a corpulent figure.

Sir Rhys Morgan smoked a cigar in the front of the

shop, whilst Nest was shown into the inner room. There were several girls waiting to be fitted, some smoking cigarettes, others trying on a variety of garments and seeking Daran's advice as if he was an infallible oracle.

“ I know exactly what you want,” Daran said to Nest. “ You shall wear gold, yes . . . you will look wonderful in gold. . . . On Monday at six o'clock please, and your dress will be quite ready for you.”

On Sunday, Morgan took Nest to the Welsh Chapel at King's Cross. She gazed around at the vast congregation in astonishment. The glorious music stirred her blood and brought tears to her eyes. She heard the voice of the preacher, speaking persuasively in her native tongue. Here in the great metropolis there was a bit of old Wales where Celtic emotionalism ran fever high, where broken hearts could receive balm, and she closed her eyes, as the beautiful strains of the organ rang out. She was on Trifaen again and Maelgwyn was holding her hand, pointing down to the great valley, and she heard his voice as clearly as if he were sitting by her side :

“ One can never be thrilled twice by the same emotion. One can never climb Trifaen again and find a maid like you. . . . ”

She glanced up at Rhys, determined, grim, immaculate in his morning coat, and she had difficulty in checking the sob in her throat. . . .

“ Oh, dear God, whatever shall I do ? ” On her knees, whilst the preacher pronounced the benediction, her wild love cry pursued her. “ I love Maelgwyn. Always shall I love Maelgwyn ! ” If she was a sinner—who was it then who said that God was Love ?

Outside, Rhys looked at her wet eyes suspiciously :

“ Makes you homesick, my dear. Well, don't

trouble, if Wales calls you back, my wife shall have a palace at the foot of Snowdon."

It took Nest all her time not to cry out passionately: "But I don't want a palace, only a home where love is!"

On Monday, at the last moment, an important business message prevented Morgan from accompanying Nest to Daran's. She refused to use the Daimler which he hired by the week, until they had their own car. She was tired of the "imprisoned" feeling that life in London was creating in her. And she clasped her hands in her old beseeching manner:

"Oh, let me find my way alone," she cried. "Indeed you treat me like a baba!"

Very reluctantly Morgan gave in to her request. He directed the way she was to take, and suddenly he caught her to him. "Now that you are going to Daran's, let him start on your wedding dress," he urged. "Why delay our wedding? Pity my silver hairs, I am not like you. Many years of my life are behind me. Besides your father would be glad to see you happily married. He told me so to-day, and Nest . . . Nest, I want you!"

She shuddered at the passion in his tones. It revolted her, made her loath this man whom she had promised to marry.—She was in a desperate state. Hardly knowing which way to turn to get out of her trouble, she fell back on the safety valve of chiding herself for her follies. . . . Was she not marrying Rhys for her father's sake?

She found herself at Daran's at half-past four. A tea laden tray had been brought down from a little room upstairs, and placed on the table with its odd patterns, odd pieces of fur and fashion books.

"Your dress is quite ready," said Daran, lighting a

cigar. “I saw your photograph in the paper to-day, little lady. So you are marrying Sir Rhys Morgan!”

“That’s odd,” said a girl, who had been trying on a moleskin cloak. “I met a woman one night who was going to see a man of that name. She was at a Club with a horrid-looking dark chap. She was the original model of that picture that is the talk of London, Motibae. . . .”

“Well indeed, that is interesting,” said Nest. “For I know the artist who painted it. I would like to see her.”

For the first time since she had left Wales, Nest found herself interested.

“She wants some clothes,” the girl told her. “The next time I run up against her, I’ll bring her along and perhaps you’ll be here. We all know each other. Daran keeps us all waiting for our clothes, but nobody in London’s got his cut, so he can afford to laugh at us.”

The fitting over, Nest found herself in the street again. She turned to the left. She was in one of the most cosmopolitan byways of London. At the top of the street she would find herself in one of the great metropolitan arteries again, teeming with life, the flotsam and jetsam of human existence. She hurried along, suddenly a man stopped dead in front of her. She hardly dared to look up; there was something familiar about him, that caused her face to become as pale as the lilies in the grounds at Cadvan.

“Nest, Nest—at last!” Maelgwyn’s voice, his glad voice, whatever else might happen. Never would she forget that glad ring in his tones. . . . When she forced herself to look up, she was shocked at his appearance. There were dark rings around his eyes, he was thin and haggard, not like a successful lover,

but more like a rejected suitor, certainly not the prosperous heir to a peerage. A dejected air of failure hung upon him.

He gazed quickly around. At the corner of the street there was a little "Patisserie Belge." "Let us go in there and have some tea," he urged, and how could Nest refuse him? At the sight of him her blood leapt joyously. Maelgwyn! Maelgwyn! Maelgwyn, her beloved had returned from the clefted mountains. How precious he was!

They sat at a glass topped table. She heard him give the order for some tea and brioche and cakes. He saw that she was agitated.—He took a savage delight in the betrayal of her weakness. . . . Surreptitiously he caught her hand and he held it so firmly that she could have cried out in agony at the pain that he caused her.

"Why in the name of God, did you do it?" he asked hoarsely. "You don't love Morgan. You've already given the lie to that, you love me," he forced her to look at him, but in self defence she sought to avoid his searching glance.

Nest poured out tea and pushed the cakes towards him, trying to fight down the impulse to burst into tears, or to further betray her delight in seeing him . . . the fact that she was mad with happiness because once again he was by her side. She fought down the desire to stroke his hair . . . that thick crisp dark hair, which now, here and there betrayed a thread of silver. She longed to put her cheek against the sleeve of his coat . . . just as she used to do, and to feel the caress of his hand upon her head. . . .

At last she forced herself to ask the fateful question, "When is your wedding day?"

“My wedding day?” His tones were full of anger.

“What do you mean by that choice remark?”

“Your wedding to Lady Morvyth.”

He did not reply at once, glancing upward, she saw that his features were twitching. If she had dealt him a blow across the face, he could not have looked more distressed. When he answered, he had no control over his tones. . . .

“There is only one woman in the world for me, and that is Nest Anwyl. Did I not make that quite clear months ago? Nothing on earth would tempt me to change my decision on that point. I have told my uncle so definitely. I have quarrelled with him. He can do what he likes with his wretched money. You can have it. At any rate no act of mine has forfeited your chance of becoming his heiress.”

“And if he left his money to me twenty times over,” Nest answered furiously, “I would not touch it. Never in this world would I take that which rightfully belongs to you.”

“Then you love Morgan?” he jeered. “I don’t believe it.”

She was smiling through her tears. Half of her burden had fallen away from her. He did not mean to marry Morvyth . . . and she?

“Nest, Nest, is it true,” he urged wildly, “that you have loved me all the time and yet you allowed yourself to be tricked into an engagement with Morgan?”

“What could I do?” she cried. “My father tried to end his life. Sir Rhys Morgan offered to help me, he is doing so. I can never repay him for his kindness to my father.”

“Then you agree that youth must ever be sacrificed to age. Is it fair, fair to you or me?”

She was silent. What answer could she give?

"Of course it isn't fair, you know it," he declared. "We are kept apart because two bitter old men loved the same woman. They are making us the scapegoat of their follies."

"What are you doing in London?"

"Living on my savings and my pay, for the moment," he declared, "and trying my best to get a job, any old job."

"But the Army?"

"A cavalry corps is no earthly good to a poor man."

"Oh, boy bach, don't say I have ruined your career." It was a terrible possibility, and yet the thought of his sacrifice thrilled her with emotion.

"I won't be driven into a loveless marriage by anyone on earth," he declared. "I've resigned my commission. I'll work."

"Oh, Maelgwyn. . . ."

She longed to throw her arms around his neck, to say: "I'll work with you," but the tragic figure of her father came between them. She was powerless, bound hand and foot. He knew what was passing in her mind, and even in his bitterness, the secret they shared, that although parted, they loved one another, brought a grain of comfort to his misery.

"Is there no getting out of it?"

She shook her head. "He is pressing on the marriage, and my father . . . they're both doing all they can!"

"Delay it, oh delay it for as long as possible," Maelgwyn urged her. "Our luck may change, something may happen. Surely fate cannot be so cruel. Oh, Pet fach, why not face Morgan and tell him the truth?"

"He knows the truth all right," said Nest with a

pitiful smile. “ If I went to him this evening and said ‘ I love Maelgwyn ’ there would still be my father to consider. I cannot desert him.”

The situation was hopeless. They were both the victims of insane jealousy—sacrificed by the lust of human hatred. Time was passing swiftly, but what do lovers care ! To them time has no meaning, it is as limitless as their own passion, its cruelty is only realised at the moment when they say good-bye, and during the dreary intervening space until they meet again.

They tried to stifle their consciences.

“ There can be no harm in our seeing one another until the marriage ! ”

“ But afterwards,” Nest’s twisted agonised features, her trembling lips, proclaimed how deeply her feelings were stirred. “ Afterwards—we must not meet ! ”

Afterwards ! They were walking along Charlotte Street. The shades of evening enveloped them. Maelgwyn crushed Nest to him savagely, his heart beat against hers, just as it used to do—they were dazed with longing for each other. . . .

“ Afterwards, what does it matter what happens, we shall both be in Hell ! ” she heard him mutter.

CHAPTER XXXI

ST. DAVID'S DAY

ST. DAVID'S DAY is a great festival amongst Welshmen. They meet in their hundreds to celebrate the memory of their patron saint! One sports the gay golden daffodil, another the leek, old friends greet each other, and young people compete in Eisteddfodau and make love on the way home along the country lanes, just as their forbears did centuries before them! It is a day of great reunion. If you are lucky enough to find yourself mixed up with a jolly Welsh crowd on the feast of St. David you will not soon forget the experience! Nest tried to persuade her father to accompany Morgan and herself to the great building where the annual dinner is held, but he shook his head.

"No, big gatherings are over for me," he excused himself. "But I am pleased to see you look so smart, girl fach," and in his heart he was saying: "It will serve Cadvan right when he sees my girl as a guest of honour at the high table. I am glad that Morgan won Nest's heart. Pity he is not a younger man. Youth is best for youth," he rubbed his thin hands together, and the old bitterness swept through him, and aloud he groaned: "Oh! Myfanwy, why did you fail me?" and for an hour or more he sat in his old attitude before the fire, his head buried in his hands, until a blessed drowsiness fell upon him. The butler came in with a basin of bread and milk, which Anwyl always took before retiring to bed. . . .

"I'll help you upstairs when you are ready to go, sir."

"Thank you very much. I'll come soon. Sleep is a gift from God!"

* * * * *

In the car that bore them to the St. David's Day dinner, Nest was silent, and preoccupied. Rhys declared that he had never seen her look so "adorably attractive." He also said many pleasant things about her golden frock which would have brought great joy to the artistic soul of Daran.

"You are a real Welsh fairy princess," said Rhys. He wanted to hug her and crush her. Hot headed youth would not have hesitated to do so, it has no more thought for the wreckage of frocks and frills, than it has for the reckless prodigality with which it showers its physical energy upon the adored. "I mustn't spoil your frock," he said gruffly.

She smiled dismally. What would Maelgwyn care for a hundred and one frocks, if they had found themselves alone in a closed car! However she was thankful for Morgan's discretion. Her thoughts were responsible for the glow and magnetism which surrounded her . . . Love! No beauty specialist in the world has anything to compare with this great bestower of loveliness.

Nest left her black velvet cloak with its luxurious ermine collar in the cloak room, and then she joined Morgan at the entrance to the reception room. It seemed as if everybody stopped talking and stared at the elegant girlish figure, beside the tall handsome man, with an order hanging on a purple ribbon just below his immaculate white tie. He wore a row of miniature medals on the left hand side of his coat. Rhys was a vain man. He was just a little piqued that Nest had not admired his "dog collar" as he

called his order. He was certainly a distinguished figure, and tremendously proud when he heard the steward announce :

“ Miss Nest Anwyl,
Sir Rhys Morgan.”

Three distinguished Welshmen were acting as hosts, and one of them was Lord Cadvan. When he met Nest a mocking smile greeted her, and he said in a low voice :

“ This is a pleasant surprise ? ”

She tried to get away from him. Sir Rhys Morgan was waiting, not ill-pleased that such a distinguished and powerful man should go out of his way to pay so much attention to his future wife.

Cadvan glanced across at him and said :

“ Just a minute, Morgan, I haven't congratulated Nest yet.” For the moment he ignored his duties as a host ; he led her to a quiet corner.

She said passionately :

“ Why have you treated Maelgwyn so badly ? ”

“ I like that,” Lord Cadvan retorted suavely. “ You lecture me for the ill that I have done to Maelgwyn, while you—you mercenary little devil, engage yourself to Morgan ! If you wanted a man old enough to be your father, why didn't you think of me ? ”

“ Oh ! why make fun of me ! ”

“ How long are you staying in London ? ”

“ For ever ! ”

“ Nonsense, Nest, you don't belong to ~~this~~ sink of iniquity, the mountains and valleys are the true setting for you.”

“ Nice talk,” she said angrily, “ and you promised to show me the world if I'd live at Cadvan.”

“ The promise still holds good. Come and see me, Nest. I have a lot to say to you.”

“ Oh, I can't come,” she began to make excuses, the

order rang out through the room: "Ladies and gentlemen, pray be seated for dinner." Then she thought, "Perhaps after all I could persuade Maelgwyn and his uncle to make it up," she wavered, Lord Cadvan was watching her intently.

"1 Chesterfield Place," he said. "I shall be there for a week."

"Very well, I'll come . . . one day."

"Sorry, Nest, but I must drag you away now" Morgan interposed.

"You shouldn't have such an attractive fiancée," said Cadvan with his grin.

When Nest sat at the high table by Rhys's side and the London Welsh choir took their places in the gallery at the end of the room, they sang the glorious old tunes which she had known from babyhood. She felt uplifted, carried far above the sordid tumult, the petty meannesses and jealousies of every-day life. Before her were a sea of faces, men and women, hoary-headed men of toil, successful men, united by the greatest bond in the world, love of their country, joining in the magnificent refrain of "Hen wlad fy Nhadau."

The Archdruid of Wales gave an address, his scholarly tones rang out impressively. Then followed the Prime Minister, distinguished, aloof, a great man. A new idol of to-day, but where was the idol of yesterday?

Nest was a little nervous when Rhys got up to speak, so many eyes seemed to be watching her, and the man whom she had promised to marry.

He was a witty and accomplished speaker. He had a grip of his subject, he wanted to show Nest what a fine dog he was . . . but she did not hear him . . . another voice was ringing in her ears . . . a pleading voice. . .

"Then you agree, that youth must ever be sacrificed to age. Is it fair to you? Is it fair to me?"

CHAPTER XXXII

BEHOLD MY BELOVED !

PRINCESS MOTIBAE arrived at Euston from North Wales about half-past nine. She dined in the train. She was composed, but secretly brimming over with excitement, and anxiety too, for Cursetjee was not the type of man with whom one would trifle lightly ; moreover, he might have tracked down Rhys before she had time to warn him of his danger. . . .

She took a taxi at Euston and gave directions to the driver. As they cut through Piccadilly, she looked out of the window and gazed with wonder at the brilliant, whirling electric signs which turned night into day, the heart of the world, blazing in a myriad fascinating hues.

When she arrived at the Cottage, the butler informed her on enquiry that Sir Rhys Morgan was dining out and would not return until late.

" It is very important that I see him as soon as possible. May I not wait ? "

The butler took her up to the music room. A bright fire was burning in the grate ; a silver tray bore decanters, soda-water and fruit. The beauty of the room was pleasing to Motibae. She took off her fur-lined coat and in her silky Eastern garments she made a rare and striking figure. She knelt before the fire ; a delicious sense of security came upon her. Was she not in the house of her beloved ? She succumbed to

the exotic drowsiness that crept over her and she fell asleep. . . .

An hour or so later Sir Rhys and Nest arrived home from the St. David's Day dinner. Anwyl had long since gone to his room. Nest was tired, worried and extremely unhappy. Morgan's egotism when he was making his speech was a terrible revelation to her of the man as he really was, the thought of how little they really had in common was terrifying to her.

Rhys put his hands upon her shoulders and he gazed at her admiringly.

"You were the best-dressed woman in the room, Nest, and far the most beautiful one. Lord Cadvan seemed to be having a little passage of arms with you about something. What was it?"

She showed pettishness for the first time to the man whom she had promised to marry.

"It is his affair and mine," she answered quickly. "Nos Dawch."

Directly Morgan was alone the butler came in.

"There is a lady waiting to see you, sir."

"A lady!" Morgan was on the point of lighting a cigar: the light died out before he had accomplished his object. No one knew better than he did how greatly he dreaded the answer to his question, "What is her name?"

"She did not give her name, Sir. She is dark—foreign-looking. In the music room."

It was difficult for Morgan to analyse his feelings when he made his way up the staircase; the world seemed to be crashing around him. Nemesis—the Nemesis of past follies—was mocking him like some great monster arisen from the dead.

He entered the room cautiously, dreading what he might find. He stood like one turned to stone when he

faced the woman whom he had sought to cut so ruthlessly out of his life.

The gold bangles on her arm glowed in the shaded light; jewels scintillated in her ears, upon her neck and fingers. The small oval face was appealingly wistful, the dark-fringed eyelids alluring; her soft black hair was garlanded with jasmine blossom.

She sprang up with a low cry. The next moment, half crying and half laughing, she prostrated herself at Morgan's feet.

"Beloved!" she breathed passionately. "There is a saying that if Mahomet will not come to the mountain, the mountain must go to Mahomet."

"Get up, Motibae," said Morgan. He was unnerved. This woman had once been dear to him . . . she had given herself freely. He had been surfeited by her passion. He led her to the sofa. A chill passed through her when she regarded his stern, set features. She passed her arms around him and sought to woo him by the warmth of her caresses . . . but Morgan did not respond to her appeal. He said curtly:

"Why did you come?"

"Jewel of my heart," she said tremulously, "I have been warned by readers of the stars, of danger to my lord. For myself I do not fear death, but for you——"

"This is England."

"But I have heard even in England strange things happen. Did not a Colonel sahib enter a door of a great London club, and is it not true that it was known that upon his person were certain sacred jewels from the God. Is it not true that from the moment he entered the building all trace of him was lost?"

Morgan shivered. He knew the story well. The Colonel in question had married a native princess.

He was about to negotiate for the sale of her jewels ; he disappeared and was never seen again. It was an uncanny story. As a boy the princess had taken Morgan for drives in her phaeton in the Park. She had given him sweets on her way to the club. Each evening she drove her husband home to their beautiful house near Richmond.

"Once to bind our love," Motibae went on, "I gave my lord a sacred gift, the jewelled eye of the god Mahadeva. Much value is set upon it. Cursetjee, my father's treasurer, has discovered that the jewel is in your possession." And Motibae told Morgan the story which she had confided to Jestyn.

"I keep the jewel locked up in my safe. I will return it to you, and you shall take it back to Handinugger."

Motibae did not reply immediately. She met his stern expression with troubled eyes. Morgan saw her lips quiver. All around them pulsed the glory of life, the charm of a perfect room, and the perfume from a great vase of carnations . . . and the ashes of a dead passion. . . .

"Ah ! jewel of my heart," she cried, "if you send me back to Handinugger, you send me back to certain death !"

Morgan's reply betrayed his uneasiness.

"If you had written, I would have found some means of returning the jewel."

At that moment Motibae and the man she loved appeared to be the only discordant notes in the perfect harmony of their surroundings. Love had placed her on its pitiless rack . . . fear of further separation from this man tormented her like fire.

"Sahib !" she exclaimed bitterly : "For you I have renounced my rank, my caste ; because I feared

for your safety, Cursetjee will betray me to my father.
 . . . Will you force me to tell him what you were
 to me. . . ."

"Surely your fears are exaggerated, Motibae."

"I feigned love for Cursetjee to save my lord," she cried; "and when we reached London, with my maid Badana, I fled. Already have I angered my father, Sivajaro, he summoned me before him and said: 'Prince Padau has heard of your fairness: he has to-day sent me this casket containing his formal offer for your hand. In spite of your high position as my daughter, it is an honour. Padau is a ruling prince. It is a great alliance and exceedingly good for our State.' And I prostrated myself at the feet of my father and I cried: 'I cannot marry him.' Then spoke my father: 'This is no time for personal feelings. If you were allied to such a man as Prince Padau, we could crush our enemies like insects between our two mighty stones of power.' Then I answered, 'I will seek the last journey before I marry Padau!' And then, Beloved, came Cursetjee—and I saw trouble spread like an eagle over the State of Handinugger. Great terror fell upon me, and I smiled into the face of the Fire-worshipper. . . . I saw my lord's friend in Wales, the artist who painted a picture of Motibae; already the wings of death are beating against the doors of his cage . . . he has desecrated the beauty of Sivajaro's daughter."

"You threaten us all with death!"

"Oh, brave and mighty one," she cried. "It is for your safety alone that I fear. In this big city the watch-dog prowls. I prayed to the gods that I might be in time. It is for your sake that I set myself out as a lure to captivate the heart of a Parsee; that I scented my body and put jasmine flowers in

my hair. Will the Keeper of the Pearl not guard her from the wolf of Handinugger? Sooner would I seek peace in the darkest well than give myself in marriage to Prince Padau. Have I not been as a wife to you, my beloved? Whatever happens oh! my Soul. I will guard my honour and die rather than lose you."

Morgan was faced with the biggest problem of his life. Knowing the East as he did, deep in his heart he realised that Motibae had not come on a frivolous mission. She would not marry Padau, or give herself to Cursetjee. . . . She claimed the man who had deserted her. She was obsessed by fear that Mahadeva would bring evil on the man she loved. . . . And Cursetjee? Perhaps for the first time Morgan vaguely realised the value of the glittering bauble Motibae had forced upon him. He knew Cursetjee's type. He would gain possession of the jewel, and then Motibae and Handinugger and the god Mahadeva would know no more of the sacred treasure.

There was only one way out of it. He must temporise with Motibae. In a conciliatory tone he said:

"When Cursetjee turns up, in your presence the jewel shall be given back to him. I will hand it to him on the boat on the day he returns to Bombay with you!"

"I will not go," Motibae cried. "Have I not told you . . . I have come to you, Lord of my life."

"At Port Said you will leave the boat," Morgan said quietly. "I will go overland and meet you. You can slip away as you did on arrival in England; and Cursetjee will go on to Bombay, but you will be safe with me."

"Beloved!" Motibae exclaimed passionately, "I will give myself to no one but you. The only Lord who

will take me to his arms if we are parted, will be Death himself."

Morgan tried to reassure her.

"If you do as I ask you, Motibae, when Cursetjee meets you again you will not excite his suspicions. Tell him what I have told you about the jewel."

"I will be brave and fearless," she whispered. "For my sake do not run unnecessary risks."

"I will remember your warning, Motibae. Dry those starry eyes, and look forward to our happy future."

"Let me this night lie within your arms, and to-morrow I will return to the hotel where my maid Badana waits for me."

Her hot breath fanned his cheek, he avoided her red pleading lips.

"Wait until we meet in Port Said, Motibae. My butler knows you are here. We must possess our souls in patience—for your sake there must not be a scandal in this house."

"Promise you will come to my hotel to-morrow."

"I promise," said Morgan.

She threw her arms round his neck and kissed him lingeringly.

"May the gods guard my beloved."

At Morgan's request the butler telephoned for a taxi. Motibae was just entering the car when someone jumped in after her.

"The fowler has snared his bird!"

She looked up into the evil, gloating face of Cursetjee.

CHAPTER XXXIII

A WELSH BEAUTY

DAZED and terrified, Motibae rested her head against the dark cloth lining of the taxi. Cursetjee watched her furtively. Her lips were tremulous, tears trickled slowly down her pale face; the man watching was consumed with bitter jealousy of his rival. . . . Possibly she had already warned Morgan about the jewel. And Morgan would sell it. They would return to Handinugger empty-handed—if he did not act swiftly.

“You have treated me like a dog!” Cursetjee muttered. “You persuaded me to bring you to England, and when we reached London you ran away from me—the man who meant to save you from the anger of the Maharajah. Is it not for your sake that I seek the jewel so that the wrath of Mahadeva shall be appeased. For all this you gave me nothing in return. I restrained my longing, for your promises were as sweet as the fruit which is found in the oasis of an endless desert. You deserted me. You may well cover up your face with your hands, false one! It is well for you that I do not strangle you! And to no purpose I employed taxis, and spent money like water, but Motibae, the daughter of Sivajaro, I found not. To-day in an omnibus I heard two men talking about a great picture . . . the picture of Motibae . . . I found the picture and saw you, shameless

one, in your unveiled beauty for these dogs to gloat upon. I traced the artist . . . I traced the man I sought. To-night he attended a big dinner with the woman he is to marry."

"Why waste your lies upon me?"

The Parsee smiled grimly. He laid his thin brown fingers on Motibae's soft cheek, and a shudder ran through her delicate, responsive body. He could afford to wait.

"I dogged his steps. I saw you enter the house, and later I saw him and the girl he is to marry go into the house you have just left. I became desperate. I intended killing you when you came out . . . I am a ruined man. As I searched London I fell among thieves. Look here," he went on earnestly, "this is all I have left." He showed her a few odd notes and some silver. "You see why I did not kill you," he went on mercilessly. "If I had done so, I had no means to escape."

Motibae was aflame with jealous passion. Now she knew the reason of Morgan's coldness. To-morrow she would find out for herself if Cursetjee's words were true. . . . If they were. . . . Why had Morgan told her to leave the boat at Port Said?

"Trouble not about money, Cursetjee," she said, and she took off two rings from her slim fingers. "Sell them."

Cursetjee knew they were of great value, some of the jewels lavished upon his only child by the Maharajah.

"I have fulfilled my mission, O impatient one. The Sahib will hand me the jewel on the day that you and I return to Handinugger."

"Will you swear that upon Mahadeva?"

"I swear it."

The next morning Princess Motibae received con-

firmation of Cursetjee's story. In an illustrated morning paper that Badana handed to her mistress there was an account of the St. David's Day dinner, and a photograph of Nest was published—beside that of Sir Rhys Morgan ; and underneath the photographs were written the lines that burnt themselves into Motibae's brain.

“ Nest Anwyl, a Welsh beauty, who will shortly become the bride of Sir Rhys Morgan. . . . ”

CHAPTER XXXIV

LILY OF THE VALLEY

MORGAN made a merciless decision, he decided to get Motibae out of the country quickly, before there was time for scandal. He would carry out his programme as arranged with Motibae up to a point, and then, when Cursetjee and she were well on their way back to India, he would send a wireless to the Captain, telling him to let the princess know he was prevented from leaving England, at the last moment. He went out early the next morning to the P. & O. offices to book passages for Bombay.

Soon after Sir Rhys left the cottage, the butler told Nest she was wanted on the telephone. To her surprise she heard a strange voice asking if she was Nest Anwyl.

"Well yes, indeed."

"You are going to marry Sir Rhys Morgan?"

"I am engaged to be married to him," Nest replied.

There was a slight pause, and then the voice continued:

"I want you to keep a secret. I knew your future husband in India. I am the Princess Motibae, and I am very anxious to give you a wedding present."

Nest was all excitement; she found herself saying:

"Oh! I should love to see you. Mister Jestyn is a friend of mine. He painted you!"

Nest heard a musical laugh.

"Can't you come along and see me? I am at the Savoy."

Nest could not resist the adventure; she promised to go straight away. She was a little piqued that Rhys had gone out without saying good morning to her. She found herself turning over the pages of the telephone book. At last the name she sought faced her. She rang up Lord Cadvan.

In a short time she was talking to him. Would he be in that day?

"Why, yes, Nest, if you will come and see me. What about luncheon, one o'clock sharp?"

With a flushed face she put down the receiver. Now to propitiate her father before Rhys returned.

Anwyl was in the music room, listlessly turning over the pages of a morning paper.

"Spring sunshine," she smiled, pointing through the windows.

"Well indeed, what is the good of it here?" he exclaimed contemptuously, throwing the paper aside.

"Come here."

She crossed over to her father and she flung her arms around his shoulders. He thought she looked pale and he asked anxiously:

"Are you happy, girl fach?"

"Why yes, of course. What a strange question."

Anwyl sighed; and he stroked her small hand.

"I wondered if you felt like me, Nest. It's very nice to live in a place like this, well ordered and near to the hub of the world, but it doesn't compensate us for the valleys and mountains of old Wales. Think of it, the snowdrops are out and the primroses will be showing soon, and the daffodils in the garden at Nant y Glo."

"Oh, father," she cried wildly; "you will break my heart!"

"Why break your heart," he asked gently, "when I tell you that although I was unhappy at Nant y Glo, it is nothing to the unhappiness I feel now that I am away from the place. If I were a younger man," he said, "I think I'd turn farmer, and with the sweat of my brow I would work until the brown earth yielded up to me the fruits of my labour."

She clung to him piteously.

"If only I were a boy instead of a girl, I'd help to stir up those old barren acres," she cried.

"But you're going to be a grand lady," said Anwyl. "A terrible lot of nonsense you and I talk when we are alone together. Hew and Davy are good boys, but they want a master to work with them, boss them; somebody young! I don't know what life will be like without you, Nest. Morgan won't take you abroad or anything of that sort?"

"I will not leave you," she cried, pressing her face to his. "My heart is in Wales. I cannot bear life out of Wales!" She dashed away from him, so that her tears would not betray her. To Nest, Wales meant Maelgwyn, and all the delights of life.

Fifteen minutes later she returned, ready to go out. "Shopping and all sorts of things," she explained to Anwyl. "When Rhys returns, tell him I may not get back very early, and I have to go to Daran's, about my wedding frock, and sometimes he keeps his customers waiting for ages."

"Mind you don't get run over," said Anwyl. "When Morgan comes in I'll have to tell him I'm getting very lonely. I want to get home. I can't help the longing. . . ."

Oh, day of adventure! Nest was restless and un-

happy ; reckless, too. Secretly she had commenced to hate Rhys . . . ungenerous of her ; for he was anxious to do anything on earth for her happiness. She took a 'bus at Sloane Square.

On reaching the Savoy she was taken up to the Princess' suite of rooms overlooking the Embankment.

When the two women faced one another Nest gave a little cry of surprise.

" You are twenty times more beautiful than Jestyn's picture ! "

" How sweet of you to say such nice things to me," said Motibae. " You too are beautiful, like a flower."

Nest gazed at her in astonishment.

" Why do I surprise you ? "

" You speak English so well," Nest confessed. " Better than I do ! "

" I had an English governess," explained Motibae. " From my earliest childhood I spoke English as easily as my own language."

Motibae beckoned Nest to sit down. She mastered the overwhelming jealousy which swept over her when she gazed upon the freshness and charm of the woman who had stolen Rhys from her. But her curiosity was gratified, and she said quietly :

" I was eager to know what sort of girl the Sahib would choose for his wife, and most surely he has chosen well."

" I am pleased you think so."

But although Princess Motibae spoke kindly, there was something about her that reminded Nest of a snake. Something hostile and revengeful. Something that made Nest feel apprehensive of danger. And yet if she had been questioned about her emotions, she would not have been able to describe the reason of her intuitive fear.

"It will be well," said Motibae, "if you do not tell Morgan Sahib that we have met. I have a present for you. Show it not to your future husband until after your wedding-day—and then wear it in memory of me." As she was speaking she took off the beautiful jewelled chain that she was wearing, and she slipped it over Nest's head.

"Well indeed, it is far too beautiful for me," Nest protested.

"There is no jewel too beautiful for so fair a flower," Motibae answered gravely.

"If you will excuse me," Nest said in her pretty artless way, "I will not take it now. I might lose it. If you wish to give it to me for a wedding present, will you not send it to me nearer my wedding day?"

"I shall be leaving England very soon," Motibae protested.

But Nest would not take the chain.

"Then I shall send it the day I leave," Motibae answered, falling in with the girl's whim. "Farewell!"

Regally she held out her slim brown hand.

"I am glad that we met," said Nest.

"O Lily of the Valley, farewell. Am I not glad too?" Motibae answered.

Nest was relieved to find herself in the street again. She was depressed.

"I believe the Princess has put an evil spell upon me," she thought ruefully. "Perhaps it was the perfume the Princess used. Anyway I prefer the scent of daffodils!"

This was going to be a day of deceit with a vengeance, Nest reflected unhappily when she reached Chesterfield Place. "Oh, to be free, to be free!" she was

utterly miserable. "There is always something within me struggling to be free, and I am helpless even as a wild bird in a cage," she thought.

Lord Cadvan's town house was not so spacious as the Castell, but it was handsomely appointed. Nest was shown into the library. Lord Cadvan had his back to the fireplace when she entered, and to her surprise she saw her mother's harp standing in one corner of the room. It gave her a sense of homeliness. The old man saw that she was pleased and he said :

"Wherever I go the harp goes also."

She did not answer. Her fingers swept over the strings.

"Oh, it makes me think of Wales!" she cried.

"Sing, Nest."

She tuned the instrument and sat down; the next moment one of Cadvan's favourite ballads was ringing through the magnificent room. He was deeply stirred by the music, and so was Nest! All the forebodings she had experienced when she was with the Princess slipped away from her. When she had finished playing Lord Cadvan did not speak for a few moments; he was a little startled by her vehemence when she cried :

"Why are you so cruel?"

"Bitterness, Nest, bitterness!" he retorted briefly.

"Is it worth while to be bitter?"

"I wonder," Cadvan said thoughtfully. "I have wondered seriously about it since you came into my life. Why did you get engaged to a man like Morgan?"

"Your fault," she smiled tremulously. "You wished Lady Morvyth to marry Maelgwyn."

"Wanted all my own way, wanted to thwart fate, wanted . . . God knows what. Anyway she's

gone abroad again. She's no longer standing between you and anyone."

"I won't desert my father. Your cruelty . . ."

"I see you are not conciliatory," Cadvan said; his harshness returned. "And Maelgwyn has not considered me; he has made his bed and he must lie upon it."

Soon afterwards luncheon was announced. It was a silent meal, and afterwards Nest said good-bye to Cadvan.

"My coming hasn't done either of us much good, has it?" she asked tremulously.

Cadvan looked at her gravely:

"At least I can give you a man of the world's advice," he replied. "Chuck Morgan!"

CHAPTER XXXV

ABIDE IN PEACE

IN the little tea-shop, the Patisserie Belge, Maelgwyn waited patiently for Nest. She was fitted for a frock at Daran's, but not a wedding frock! Maelgwyn thought she looked tired when she met him, and he said :

"Sweetheart, you are losing your roses;" and she answered him impetuously :

"It's so terrible, this deceit! I wish I was back at Nant y Glo. I feel as if something terrible is going to happen. I shall die if I marry Morgan."

She told him of Motibae, and of her visit to Cadvan ; of her father's longing to get back to Wales.

"Nest, let me see him," Maelgwyn urged her. "Let me tell him that I will be a son to him. I'll do my best on the land. I was afraid at first, but I have no fear now."

She clung to him.

"And I'll tell Rhys the truth. I'll persuade my father to come home to Nant y Glo. Come to Wales, Maelgwyn, and beg my father to give his consent to our marriage."

When Nest returned to the Cottage, Anwyl made excuses for Morgan's absence.

"Sir Rhys was very worried when he came in," he explained. "I think he has had to do some business for some people who have just arrived from India.

He has had to go away for a few days. At any rate, my girl, he asked me to give you a message from him : that after this week his whole life would be devoted to you."

" Oh, father bach," she cried, clinging to him just as she had clung to Maelgwyn. " Take me home ! I cannot marry Rhys. I have seen Maelgwyn again ; he is dearer than the world to me. . . . Don't wreck my life. . . . "

He gathered her in his arms and tried to soothe her.

" If Maelgwyn is willing to come and toil at Nant y Glo," Anwyl answered ; " if your love is so great, greater than Cadvan's hatred . . . greater than the wrong that Myfanwy has done unto me, come you two to Nant y Glo and abide in peace."

* * * * *

From the moment Cursetjee had succeeded in tracking Morgan he was shadowed. It got on his nerves. Afraid of betraying himself to the girl he loved, he made up his mind to stay at his club until he had seen Motibae safely on the boat for Bombay. Then—then Nest—and the consummation of his love, the splendid realisation of his dreams ! He sent for Cursetjee and dined with him. He tried to put him off the scent. But the Oriental was too cunning ; he knew that Morgan Sahib was acting, and Motibae was acting too, still playing with fire. Cursetjee was reassured as to the safety of the sacred jewel, but he had learnt the deadly truth : Motibae's passion for Morgan had increased.

" So the Princess does not pine for lovers," he said to her vindictively two nights before they embarked for the East. " The presence of Cursetjee does not leave the blush of joy upon her cheek, or curve her lips in smiles. Her eyes are dull. . . . I have

watched and waited many days, and I have noted thy pale face with heaviness in my heart."

"I beg you to leave me," cried Motibae.

Half mad with jealousy, Cursetjee answered:

"So, so, you would rid yourself of me. Dost thou not know, foolish one, that Morgan sahib courts my favours. Easy would it be for me to put Datura into his coffee. He will tire of thy beauty and cast thee off for the woman of his own race, but Cursetjee will ever be thy adorer if thou wilt come to his arms."

Motibae shuddered with disgust; his threats frightened her. Suppose he carried out his threat . . . and robbed her of Rhys!

"Cursetjee," she lied to him, "The sahib is not my lover; you know that yourself. He belongs to the wild-flower who awaits the day when she may give herself in marriage to him. Have I not seen her? Even to-night will I post this chain as a gift for her wedding."

He laughed ironically.

"Cursetjee is not a fool, and thy deceitful lies stir up dark schemes."

Soon afterwards Cursetjee left Motibae. She was troubled with foreboding thoughts. She went across to a window. She looked towards the river; she gazed upon the twinkling lights, reading her doom in the darkening sky. . . .

At last came the day of embarkation. Sir Rhys Morgan called at the Savoy in a car. Cursetjee, Motibae and her maid joined him. Their luggage had already been sent ahead. Cursetjee was quiet and watchful.

"Do you regret leaving London, Motibae?" Morgan asked her.

"It is always well to return to one's own people,"

she replied, feeling Cursetjee's burning glance upon her.

The noise, the rush and bustle, the stream of life passing before them, caught them up in its great palpitating vortex. Special cabins had been reserved for Motibae: already the captain had been informed of the presence of the Maharajah's daughter. In the saloon the sacred jewel of the Mahadeva was handed over to Cursetjee.

Morgan went off to see the captain and Cursetjee said:

"Well, little bud, no more shall we part company. I have counted the long dark hours that have hidden you from me. Thy lover is impatient. You do not intend to fool me?"

He peered suspiciously into the small still face.

"The allurements of men do not captivate me," she answered. "The heat of passion does not fire my blood. It makes me cold, like the snow on the top-most peaks of the Himalayas. Am I never to have rest from thee again, Cursetjee?"

"Not so long as breath palpitates in my being," he said harshly. "Life without thy caress is as the wilderness of Hell. To-night thou shalt come to me. The memory of the accursed Morgan shall no longer chill thy ardour, Cursetjee shall quicken thy desires."

"Listen to me, now," was Motibae's answer. "Morgan Sahib is as far above me as the God in the Heavens. His heart is with the woman who awaits him . . . I go to complete my mission, then the life of Motibae is ended."

"You cannot cheat me," Cursetjee laughed cruelly.

These were his last words before he left her. She touched a bell and ordered tea. With cold, nerveless fingers she unfastened her European garments. She

hastily donned her sari, the bangles and bells on her arms. . . .

On deck Morgan had made arrangements with the captain to hand a letter to Motibae when the ship reached Port Said. Complimenting himself upon his shrewdness, he was smiling when he made his way through the excited throng on the deck.

He knocked on the door of Motibae's cabin. The moment had come for good-bye. . . . He was amazed when he saw her. She looked regally beautiful in her Eastern robes and gorgeous jewels.

"Why, Motibae," he cried, "why are you dressed like this?"

She smiled and poured out some tea, a cup for herself and one for Morgan.

"There's just time, before I go," he said. He was glad of the tea. It helped to break the tension. "I'm thirsty as a fish," he added, raising the cup to his lips. He drank quickly, Motibae followed his example. She put down her cup. She knelt at Morgan's feet . . . a splendid, tragic figure. A mist seemed to be enveloping him. His mouth became dry. . . .

"Deuced hot in here," he muttered.

Motibae was speaking; her words sounded a long way off. Her arms were around him. She was dragging him down to the sofa . . . her warm, lingeringly passionate kisses suffocated him. Kisses that once upon a time had whipped his blood to flame!

"Beloved, you did not mean to join me at Port Said. . . . You were sending me to the wolf. But there is no other woman for my lord but Motibae. . . ."

"Motibae . . . Motibae. . . . For God's sake . . ."

She struggled to fight the drowsiness creeping over

her ; again she struggled to kiss the man's tortured features. She smiled in her agony as she stretched her beautiful limbs covered with their glittering draperies, she was muttering incoherently, " Sweet is death with thee, O lord of my Soul ! " She wrapt her arms around him and his head fell heavily upon her jewelled breast. . . .

CHAPTER XXXVI

TO HER GLORIOUS MEMORY

ANWYL felt like a truant schoolboy when he helped Nest to get away from the Cottage before Morgan's return. He had sent a telegram to Betti; he was crazy with excitement. He exhibited no surprise when he saw Maelgwyn at Euston. He looked up into the thin, haggard face and his heart was moved to pity when Maelgwyn said:

"Will you have me, sir, at Nant y Glo? Nest has told me"

"That we want a boss there," Anwyl chuckled. Nothing troubled him for the moment; he was off back to Wales. He had left a letter behind for Morgan, simple, direct

"I am sorry my girl cannot marry you. She is very young. It is a good thing that she has found out her mistake before it is too late."

Anwyl was glad that Maelgwyn was with them. "Strange how my feelings have changed," he thought uneasily. In reality he felt age creeping over him. Maelgwyn's virile manhood gave him a sense of security. He wanted somebody to look after him, somebody to look after Nest. . . . The years were robbing him of his self-confidence.

For the greater part of the journey Anwyl slept.

Maelgwyn and Nest held hands. They did not want to talk. They were content to sit quietly side by side, thrilled by each other's magnetism.

"Of course Morgan will cut up rough," Maelgwyn was thinking.

And Nest whispered uneasily: "Rhys will be very angry. He'll come to Nant y Glo; but I cannot marry him."

"No, I am your man," said her true love.

"Maelgwyn . . ." her face lit up, their eyes met. What need of speech?

Oh, glorious love! what recompense can the world give for its loss? What gratitude can suffice the fate that flings it to us? If it is yours, guard it with your life. And if it wounds you, leaves you in the dust, breaks you . . . even then fold your hands across your broken heart and thank God that its memory is eternal. Life without love is the world without light. Its glory is brighter than the sun.

"The mountains . . . the mountains!" cried Nest.

Anwyl awakened at her cry.

"Good to be home," he echoed, fumbling in his pocket for his pipe. Lewis Jestyn seized his hands, his wrinkled features quivering with excitement, for once in his life he was too deeply stirred to greet Anwyl's triumphant return to Nant y Glo with his everlasting Crawshay Bailey.

Betti and Hew were waiting on the bridge, bold as brass, proud as a couple of peacocks.

"Hew's wife now for sure," cried Betti to her master.

It was that night when they were sitting in the parlour that Nest opened her mother's volume of the Song of Songs.

"Do you remember this, boy bach," she whispered to Maelgwyn, pointing to the verse:

"At the hour when the day shall end, and when the shadows lengthen, return my beloved and be thou like unto a doe, or a hind's fawn upon the clefted mountains. . . ."

Anwyl got up from his chair by the fire.

"Myfanwy's old book!" He stretched out his hand.

"You want it, father bach?"

He nodded.

"That's a fine verse," he said. "You shouldn't spoil the book by turning down the pages. . . ."

"But I didn't do it," Nest answered; and in a low voice she added, "She did it."

With a frown Anwyl straightened the page, and he gave a sudden cry.

"Strange . . . very strange! . . ."

"What is it, father dear? Mam's writing. How faint it is!" Nest began reading aloud the faint pencil script written above the print at the top and below the page.

"Ifor . . . forgive me. I did not know how deep was your love until our child was born. I am dying, but I love you now and ever. Myfanwy."

Anwyl was trembling with excitement. "Written to me . . . written after the letter . . . Myfanwy. . . . Myfanwy!"

He passed out of the room and through the door and he stumbled along the road. Nest and Maelgwyn followed at a distance to the churchyard. Anwyl unfastened the gate and entered, and when they reached

him he was lying prostrate across the defaced tomb, sobbing like a child. . . .

"Father bach! . . . Father bach! Let us place the carving of the Jesu shepherd here. Pleased will the little Mam be, and carve the words she loved: 'And He shall gather the lambs in His arms.'"

Anwyl got up and his tear-stained features were bathed in smiles:

"Myfanwy loved helpless things; little children and the young lambs. . . . Yes, yes. . . . Myfanwy will like the Jesu shepherd," he mused, taking comfort in the thought; and suddenly he turned to Nest.

"And when Lord Cadvan returns, you shall take the Song of Songs to him and prove to him that Myfanwy was satisfied with the man of her choice."

But the following morning Cadvan came to Nant y Glo. He asked for Nest and Betti showed him into the parlour.

"This is a terrible thing about Morgan," he said.

"Well indeed, I do not know what you mean." And believing that he had heard of her broken engagement, Nest said: "Maelgwyn is here, he is going to farm Nant y Glo. I have broken off my engagement to Sir Rhys . . . I am going to marry Maelgwyn."

"Then you intend to become a couple of paupers?"

"Not while we have health and strength to work."

After a slight pause Nest heard Cadvan say:

"I see! Youth is just as stubborn as it is head-strong," and then his voice took a graver note and he put his hand on Nest's shoulder. "I came to break some unpleasant news to you. Of course I didn't know that you and my nephew had kicked over the traces and defied the damn lot of us. . . ."

Nest looked up. She saw that he was struggling with

a decision, whether to tell her the reason of his visit or not.

"Oh! you'd better know," he jerked out. "The papers are full of it. Rhys Morgan was poisoned yesterday by an Indian Princess. They were both found dead in the cabin of a P. & O. ship. The woman had used a deadly poison—*datura*."

Nest covered her face with her hands.

"Horrible," she cried. "Now I know why I was afraid when I met her," and she confided to Lord Cadvan the story of her meeting with Princess Motibae.

"A woman's jealousy," Cadvan's mouth took its cynical curve, "pretty deadly thing, but God, I'd rather be destroyed by a woman . . . than . . ."

He did not finish his sentence. Nest was unnerved by his story, he tried to cheer her up in his whimsical, bitter sweet way.

"Come, come. I remember an old song about sunshine; anyway there's sun on the hill for you, Nest. You've only got to wander out of the valley to find it, and now take me to your father."

In the parlour, the two men met.

Cadvan did not waste words.

"I sent you a letter, a sacred letter, and I kept back a few pencilled lines that reached me before . . . the end. Myfanwy loved you, Anwyl."

Anwyl mastered his emotion.

"I know," he withdrew the faded volume of the Song of Songs out of his pocket. "Myfanwy's last message to me is written here—and in my heart."

Cadvan brushed his hand across his eyes, his voice shook pitifully when he answered:

"We loved the same woman, and now we are old men. . . ." He paused, someone was standing in the doorway. "Is that you, Maelgwyn? I want you

to marry Nest from the Castell. We will celebrate the wedding there." And to Anwyl he said: "You and I will drink to Myfanwy's glorious memory. . . ."

"Like a dream is it not," Nest murmured that night as she and Maelgwyn watched the shadows lengthen on Trifaen's slopes. She sighed contentedly when he answered her:

"No, it is a glorious reality." Maelgwyn crushed her in his arms. The throbbing of his heart thrilled her, made her eyes sparkle with tears, and her lips quiver, for love is half sweet and half bitter, full of sunshine and darkness, of trust and of fear. Like a jewel it must be treasured, hidden far away from the lust, greed and jealousy of the world.

"Maelgwyn . . . Maelgwyn . . . Maelgwyn . . ." and then silence, the stars, the shadows of the eternal hills and the brooding beauty of the valley. Thus were Nest and her lover united in the glory of their passion.

THE END

